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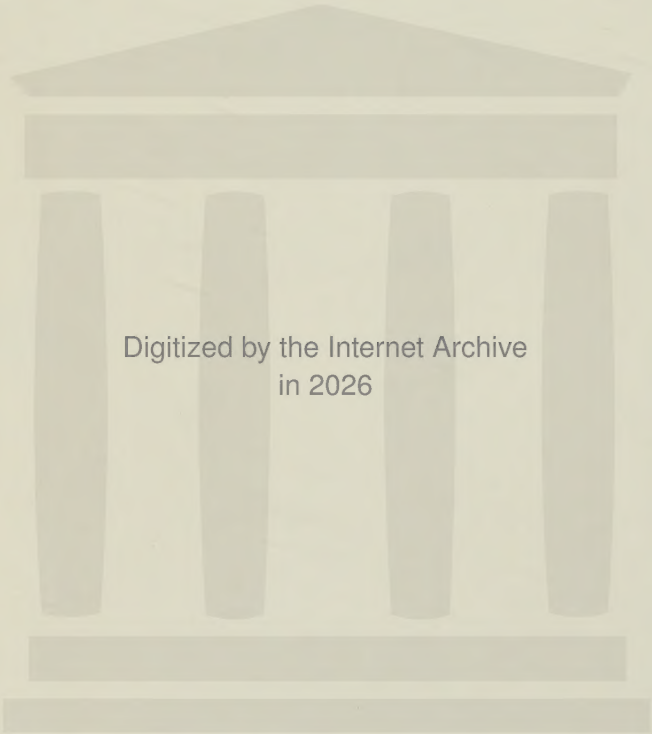
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SPIRITUAL VOICES IN MODERN LITERATURE

SPIRITUAL VOICES
IN
MODERN LITERATURE

BY

TREVOR H. DAVIES, D.D.

NEW YORK

GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

STATE NORMAL SCHOOL
CHADRON, NEBRASKA

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE METROPOLITAN CHURCH, TORONTO, CANADA, IN GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF A VERY GENEROUS SYMPATHY AND A MOST HAPPY FELLOWSHIP

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PREFACE

The lectures included in this volume were delivered in the Metropolitan Church, Toronto, in the winter of 1918–19, and are now published in response to the request of many who heard them.

My object in adopting the Series was to find modern illustrations of some of the great truths to which the Church stands committed. The difficulty consisted in making a selection out of the many influential voices which witness to the yearning of men, and to the Divine response in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Christian Faith and the Christian Ethic might be reconstructed from the prophetic teachers of the nineteenth century, some proclaiming one and some another aspect of the full-orbed truth. It is a far cry from Hawthorne to James Smetham, from Ibsen to Francis Thompson, and yet each, after his own genius, gave utterance to an authentic Christian truth. There are few more re-

markable facts in biographical literature than that Lord Morley should have written, with such reverence and insight, the Life of Gladstone, a life in nothing more distinguished than in its luminous religious certainties and character.

This was the viewpoint of the ten lectures. The theme and the aim were fixed. I was not attempting essays in literature, but the enforcement of Christian truth. I have, however, used my utmost care to avoid imputing my own convictions to others, and have striven to frankly present the exposition of the truth as it was conceived and portrayed by the selected author.

The lectures were written after they had been publicly delivered, in the midst of the duties of a city pastorate, and without opportunity for that further revision which, in presenting them to a larger public, I so much desire had been possible.

I am greatly indebted to my friend, Professor J. H. Michael, M.A., for his careful reading of the lectures in proof.

TREVOR H. DAVIES.

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FRANCIS THOMPSON: "THE HOUND OF HEAVEN"

An Epic of the Love That Will Not Let Us Go

FRANCIS THOMPSON: "THE HOUND OF HEAVEN"

AN EPIC OF THE LOVE THAT WILL NOT LET US GO

"Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to thee."

PSALM CXXXIX. 7-12.

"What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?"

ST. LUKE XV. 4.

THEODORE WATTS DUNTON in his suggestive essay on "The Renascence of Wonder" dwells upon the two impulses in the human mind: "the impulse of acceptance, which takes unchallenged and for granted all the phe-

nomena of the outer world, and the impulse to confront these phenomena with eyes of enquiry and wonder." This impulse of wonder, he continues, becomes "a creative power" in literature and art. When men take great things for granted, their work lacks distinction and freshness. Elevation of thought and style demands the lowly, reverent mind.

This principle is supremely true in religion and character: we suffer when there is no wonder in our hearts. There are some truths which cannot even be seen until we have learnt to take the shoes from off our feet, knowing that the place whereon we stand is holy ground. The Bible is the most wonderful book in the world because its seers and teachers are amazed at the grace of God, finding it almost too good to be true. "*Unto me,*" cried St. Paul, "who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." It is not the holiness of God alone which so impresses the heart, but the spectacle of Infinite holiness crossing the gulf to abide among the outlaws. That He should forgive those who have so greatly sinned might well

amaze the awakened heart, but far more wonderful is the mercy that "lays forgiveness at our feet, and pleads with us to take it." Our familiarity with the messages of grace is a peril: we need to recover the apostolic impulse of wonder. The mind which takes for granted that which "angels desire to look into" condemns itself to dullness and mediocrity in character.

Evangelical wonder is born of the Divine quest for man. We have sometimes spoken as if the search were on our side. "The history of philosophy," wrote George Henry Lewes, "is the history of man's quest for God." We pursue, it would seem, One who eludes our groping thought; we hear the sweep of His garment, but when we go forward He is not there. It is of very deep significance that we have never been able to give up the quest. Emerson tells of two of his friends, who for twenty-five years sought to prove the immortality of the soul. And he adds that the most powerful proof of the doctrine was in the impulse which sustained that prolonged endeavour. One proof that God is seeking man lies in the fact that man is ever seeking God. The pursuer is actually the pursued. "We should

not seek Him," said Pascal, "had we not found Him."

That Divine quest is the constant theme of the Bible. It tells the great story of God's insistent pursuit of the human soul. The Universe, vast as it is, gives no safe hiding-place from Him; it affords no single spot where we may feel secure from His all-searching presence. "Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me." We are like that wanderer of old coming along the trail at the close of day, faint and lonely, who thought he had left his father's God behind him because he had left his father's tent, but discovered, as he lay down to rest upon the hillside, that he was pursued. "Lo, God is here and I knew it not," was his astonished cry. For the shepherd is out after the sheep, and though it seek to escape the inexorable pursuer, he does not give up the quest until he finds it. That, we say again, is the truth which has smitten, with ever deepening wonder, the heralds of the gospel in every age. "There is mercy with God that He may be *feared.*" Augustine, Francis of Assisi, Luther, Wesley, Newman, Spurgeon never could become accustomed to this tremendous message

given to them. Their words pulsate with wonder. Amazement only deepens in those great souls as they go out to persuade men to turn and find God —not another, but Himself, in very truth—by their side.

This ceaseless quest is the burden of Francis Thompson's greatest poem—"The Hound of Heaven." The poem is the product of an experience. He had been lost and was found. It is the cry of a penitent and reclaimed soul. He stands overwhelmed by wonder; he cannot take it for granted; he is spellbound in a Universe that was transfigured by the Cross of our Saviour. In the heart of this man there abides the cry which rings to one clear note throughout the ages:

"Amazing love, immense and free,
For, O my God, it found out me."

Thompson could not look upon a sunset without being reminded of the Cross, nor hail the sunrise without seeing the glory of our Lord's resurrection. The "Hound of Heaven" is an epic of the love that would not let him go. He confesses that he had sought to evade the "tremendous

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Lover," but found no escape until at last he gave up the attempt and was found, content then, as he had never been content before.

"Every poet," said Thompson in a letter quoted by Mr. Everard Meynell in his biography of the poet, "should be able to give a clear and logical prose résumé of his teaching as terse as a page of scholastic philosophy." Sometimes such might be desirable to readers his poetry; but we need no prose résumé here. The haunting stanza which with slight variations is five times repeated in "The Hound of Heaven" sums up the message:

"But with unhurrying chase,
And unperturbèd pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
They beat—and a Voice beat
More instant than the Feet—
'All things betray thee, who betrayest Me.'"

Some one is out after the Soul of man! Most of us are made aware of this in one way or another. We go on heedless until something occurs which startles us by a sense of being overlooked. Men behave themselves in different ways when such an impression comes to them, for it is pos-

sible to dismiss the whole conception as the fantasy of the mind, a scruple of a too-sensitive conscience, or to accept it as a summons to the best that is in us. In any case such hours are epoch-making in the soul's history. What Thompson would have us believe is that the experience has objective reality: there is One by our side; and our happiness depends upon making full use of those special moments in life when His coming makes the heart soft and tender. It is love not hate which pursues us—mercy and not judgment, Christ and not the devil.

The life story of the poet explains much in his work. Francis Thompson was born in Lancashire, England, the son of a medical practitioner who purposed for him the same profession. He was actually qualified for nothing except letters; a more helpless being than the poet outside his art it would be difficult to find. After years of the most desultory study, he left home and went to London, where he rapidly descended to the lowest strata of poverty and impotence. He frequently slept on the Thames Embankment or in the public parks, and was dependent upon the few coppers he picked up by selling matches

and bootlaces or opening cab-doors in the city streets. One day Mr. Wilfrid Meynell, then the Editor of "Merry England,"—to whom, together with his gifted wife, English Literature owes so much for the unwearied patience with which they sought and reclaimed the derelict poet,—received an essay entitled "Paganism" signed by Francis Thompson. Soiled as it was, with words almost obliterated here and there, it bore the unmistakable stamp of genius upon it, and after months of investigation Mr. Meynell managed to obtain an interview with the author. The meeting is described by the editor: "The door opened and a strange hand was thrust in. The door closed but Thompson had not entered. Again it opened; again it shut. At the third attempt a waif of a man came in. No such figure had been looked for, more ragged and unkempt than the average beggar, with no shirt beneath his coat, and bare feet in broken shoes." Try to realize what it meant to such a man to have been so jealously followed by the Love of God!

Love is never so wonderful as when it is bestowed upon those who know themselves to be

objects of indifference, if not of contempt, to the world in which they live. It may be casually esteemed by the man who abounds in the esteem and consideration of others; but to those who are condemned to carry the shafts of obloquy and still retain any proper measure of self-respect, love becomes the pearl of great price. Thompson had been despised even among the despised. He had accustomed himself to indifference. And yet he had been sought out as one would seek for what was rare and precious. No wonder that to this delivered soul, the Cross of our blessed Lord became the sum and embodiment of all his universe, mental, moral and spiritual. For Francis Thompson was the prodigal, who had been sent out into the fields to feed the swine, and could not rest there because something continually stirred up within him recollections of a great heritage, and who, knowing full well that the lot of a servant was too good for him, nevertheless heard the all-pitying voice cry: "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet, and bring hither the fatted calf and kill it,

for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found."

It is strange to some critics that Francis Thompson,—having lived in the streets of London, and having seen that vast city without any of those concealments which make it unknown to many who have spent their years there—did not become a poet of the city streets. How he could have portrayed it all,—the glare, the vice, the riotous profanity, the barbarous passion, the squalor and all that sum of wrong inflicted and endured! But we find his memories of London, as of other places, aflame with one luminous image. He saw:

"The traffic of Jacob's ladder
Pitched between Heaven and Charing Cross."

. . . . . .

And lo, Christ walking on the water,
Not of Genesareth, but Thames.

THE SOUL IN FLIGHT

"THE HOUND OF HEAVEN" describes the soul's attempt to escape from God. Later on the poet will face the question: How is it

that, being made aware of God's presence, our first instinct is to seek some shelter? Meantime, he insists upon the fact. The poem opens with the soul in flight, and it portrays some of the attempted roads along which the fugitive sped in this unnatural desire. Every man makes his own refuge, and there is not one interest in all his life, whether good or evil, which has not been sought by the hunted soul as a refuge from the pursuing Love of God. It should be carefully noted that Thompson does not name anything essentially evil as one of his hiding places. We have all said to sin "Cover thou me," but we have also made the same appeal to things in themselves lawful and good. Man has the power of making the good an enemy to the best, and of turning what should be a means of communion with God into a screen which His grace has to make luminous by fiery burnings.

(*a*) He retreats within himself thinking to bar the door of his own life against the Great Seeker. "I fled him down the labyrinthine ways of my own mind . . . in the mist of tears, and under running laughter, up vistaed hopes, down chasméd fears." But he found, as our

Lord declared, that when a man comes to himself he is not far from God. There is no single realm of the human mind which is without its witness. The *laws of thought* imply a Lawgiver as certainly as do those outward laws by which the material universe is fashioned and controlled. Passing from the world of thought into that of the *emotions,* with "its vistaed hopes, and chasméd fears," we are made still more vividly aware of that awful Presence. Many profound students of life have found the sources of religious faith in our ultimate sense of dependence. Human need is a cry of the heart for God. We do not pray because we have argued ourselves into the reasonableness of prayer; when we pray we obey an impulse of our nature which goes deeper than any system of thought by which it has been defended. And who can hope to flee from God by turning to meet his own *conscience?* That inward monitor speaks with an authority which is derived from no human source. The human soul is no place for one to escape God. He knows those "labyrinthine ways" far better than we know them ourselves, and treads with sure foot where we falter and stumble. The key

of every door hangs upon his girdle. Others we may shut out, but He passes by unobserved. We have scarcely shut the door than we catch the steady footfall of "those strong Feet that follow, follow after."

(*b*) Driven from within himself, the hunted soul sought covert in human love. "I pled by many a hearted casement." "But, if one little casement parted wide, the gust of His approach would clash it to." He hears, as so many have heard, in the beating of the human heart the gentle patter of the following feet. "God is Love, and every one that loveth . . . knoweth God." The heart "parted wide" admits Him whose love is the source of all human love. Once again the fugitive is dislodged and must seek fresh cover.

(*c*) The wonders of the vast universe, he thinks, will surely be sufficient to satisfy his human need. Like the Psalmist he ascends into heaven, and "smites for shelter at the gold gateways of the stars," he "clings to the whistling mane of every wind," but only to find, that "even there God's hand held him." There is no lawless place in all the world except where the will of

man clashes with the will of his Maker. And that thought drives him back to earth with the unperturbed and deliberate patter of the feet ever behind him.

(*d*) Coming back to earth he seeks a hiding place in the innocent life of little children. There is some kinship between the poet and the child, and Thompson was never quite at home save with children. He approached them, not as a psychologist anxious to analyse or study the child mind, but as one in whom the child-spirit had been kept alive. He was one of them in their glee and knew the wonderful world in which they live. In an Ode to his godchild he counsels where he may be found in Paradise should the grace of God bring him there at last.

"Turn not your tread along the Uranian sod
Among the bearded counsellors of God."

. . . . . .

Pass where majestical the eternal peers,
The stately choice of the great Saintdom meet.

. . . . . .

Look for me in the nurseries of heaven."

But the nursery is no place for the man who would escape God. "And Enoch walked with

God after he begat Methusaleh," declares the ancient writer, suggesting that it was the child that led the patriarch to that "walk with God" which has so filled our hearts with desire. "Out of the mouth of children and of little children hast Thou made a fortress for Thyself" is one of the great utterances of the Psalmist—a statement which afterwards received the sanction of our Lord Himself. The child heart is a favourite hunting ground of the Celestial Huntsman.

(*e*) The last attempt to escape is made in Nature—this time the Nature, not of the scientific observer, but of the artist,—into the changeful moods of which he seeks to enter by sympathy.

"I triumphed and I saddened with all weather.
Heaven and I wept together.
And its sweet tears were salt with mortal mine.
Against the red throb of its sunset-heart
I laid my own to beat,
And share commingling heat;
But not by that, by that, was eased my human smart."

Lover of Nature as he was he discovered, as he wrote to a friend, that there is no *heart* there.

They "make believe" who say there is. She "speaks by silences, we speak in sound;" the sea is salt unwittingly and unregretfully, our tears are of the soul which suffers and which cries. Nature is not our dwelling-place, though it has pointed the way home to many. Its splendid sunsets, its shimmering streams, its giant hills, its summer fields are open roads to Him Who calls us to His fellowship. And so, seeking to escape in these things, the soul hears again the footfall and the voice:

"Nigh and nigh draws the chase,
With unperturbèd pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy;
And past those noisèd Feet
A voice comes yet more fleet—
'Lo! naught contents thee, who content'st not me.'"

And so the chase comes to an end. The poet had sought to escape God in God's own world, and, naturally, had failed. He is like the prophet, in that little understood book of our sacred scriptures, who thought to put the seas between him and Jehovah, but found Him walking on the waters; who imagined that human life outside

Israel would be a secure hiding-place, but found Him in the kindness of untutored sailors, and in the penitent people of Nineveh; and who, when he turned in bitterness to the labyrinthine ways of his own mind, heard even there the voice, "Doest thou well to be angry, Jonah?"

There is no up nor down in all the Universe where we can finally escape this "tremendous Lover." Meister Eckhart has well said, "He who will escape Him, only runs to His bosom; for all corners are open to Him."

THE FEAR OF THE BEST

NOW THAT he is brought to bay, the poet tells why he had sought to flee from the Love of God. A father who tried to explain this poem to his children was suddenly confronted by the question asked by the youngest of his hearers—"But why did he want to run away from God?" Who could explain to the little child why the very thought of God does not fill our hearts with confidence and peace? "What has God done," ask Faber, "that men should not trust Him?"

The poet's explanation is that he was afraid so high a fellowship would make such demands upon him as would be intolerable. Every pure friendship has an austere side challenging our indolence and summoning us to spiritual affinity. Thompson had as he puts it:

"Heard the trumpet sound
From the hid battlements of Eternity."

And turning hastily, he had obtained a half glimpse of the Summoner:

"With glooming robes purpureal, cypress-crowned."

The trumpet called to heroic sacrifice, and it was from that dread call he had turned so persistently away.

It is this half glimpse of Christianity which chills the blood. "The love of Jesus, what it is, none but His loved ones know." There are houses in London, owned by great families, which have no outward attractions, but within hold treasures of art and exquisite forms of beauty and colour. Christianity does not disclose its secret to the

outsider, and it is for ever true that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath laid up for those that love Him." But these things are revealed to us, continues the apostle, "by His Spirit." To the Court of Charles II, John Milton was an object of pity if not of contempt. He held aloof from its pleasures though he might have been a participator, so desirable was his powerful pen. But had they seen all with any understanding, the courtiers would have found no occasion for their pity in that noble mind. He had "solid joys and lasting pleasures" of which they knew nothing. Minions of that Court came one day, with bribes in their hands, to seduce him from his high allegiance, but when they found the blind poet seated at the organ pouring forth his soul in praise and worship, even they understood that they could make no appeal to him with the things they valued, and returned without making their offer. He who heard "the sevenfold hallelujahs of the angels" would not be perverted by the ribaldry of Rochester and his peers.

In obedience to Christ every "nay" has its

compensating "yea." Renunciation is life not death. Sacrifice to Christ and for His sake is to joy and not to sorrow. There is a cross at the heart of human blessedness. Grim and inexorable as it appears at times the Will of God holds life's richest treasures. When Francis Thompson understood this, he was content to commit his life "to the Great Purifier, his will to the Sovereign Will of the Universe." Meantime he trembles because he cannot escape and asks despondently of his Captor:

"Ah! is thy love indeed
A weed, albeit an amaranthine weed,
Suffering no flowers except its own to mount?"

THE RECOMPENSE OF SURRENDER

AS THE poem concludes we hear the words of Incarnate Love to the trembling soul which makes no further attempt to escape:

"Strange, piteous, futile thing!

. . . . . .

How little worthy of any love thou art!
Whom wilt thou find to love ignoble thee
Save Me, save only Me?"

We have marvelled that the soul should seek to evade Infinite Love. But the deeper mystery of the chase is that Love makes such high account of man's unworthiness. We are continually baffled to explain the origin of human love. In an English Law Court we heard a wife, who bore on her scarred face the marks of her husband's cruelty, plead for his acquittal as if he had brought only happiness into her life. Some one asked as we stood there, "What can she see in the man to love?" and none could answer for no other saw what she had seen in him. But who can explain the yearning of God for sinful man, or give any account of the mystery of the Cross?

"The innocent moon that nothing does but shine,
Moves all the labouring surges of the world,"

exclaims our poet in one of his arresting metaphors. But what *innocence* of ours moves the vast ocean of the Divine Love? It is self-moved, and rolls in majesty so unique and glorious that "God commendeth his love for us, in that *while we were yet sinners* Christ died for us."

And so he takes up the strain again, returning continually to this deep note of wonder:

"Whom wilt thou find to love ignoble thee
Save Me, save only Me?
All which I took from thee, I did but take,
Not for thy harms
But just that thou might'st seek it in my arms.
All which thy child's mistake
Fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home;
Rise, clasp My hand, and come!"

It was a habit of Coleridge to annotate the books he read with suggestions which occurred to him, and which illuminated the text by wonderful flashes of his genius. He would do this occasionally, even with books borrowed from his friends. There is in the British Museum a book containing his thoughts on the confession of sin, which it is worth taking a long journey to read and digest. It was on this custom of his friend that Charles Lamb wrote his exhortation. "Reader, lend thy books to S. T. C. for he will return them to thee with usury. He will enrich them with his annotations, thus tripling their value. I have had experience, and I counsel thee. Shut not thy heart, nor thy library against S. T. C." This

is how our Lord deals with that which we entrust to Him. He enriches everything. His annotations add immeasurably to the poorly written scroll of our life. In His care Science heals, Art ennobles, Education becomes the advocate of truth not of falsehood, Labour an enrichment to all, the Home a section of His spiritual Church, and every human interest a means of communion with Himself. We possess our possessions only when we hold them in the Will of God. Christ takes not to destroy but to fulfil that which is given to Him, and has promised to return it to us increased "a hundredfold now in this time," with the added assurance of "life everlasting." (Mark x, 29-30.)

The poem ends with the recurring lines:

"Halts by me that footfall:
Is my gloom, after all,
Shade of His Hand outstretched caressingly?
'Ah! fondest, blindest, weakest,
I am He whom thou seekest,
Thou drawest life from thee, who drawest Me.'"

Most of us will find in this great story of Francis Thompson a faithful transcript of life. We have sought some screen to hide us from the

Divine Seeker. It may not have been an evil thing, but it was not the highest, and the ambition of Love will not content itself with less. From time to time something occurs which stings us into restlessness—and turns our thought to Him. If we make our "bed in hell" He will not allow it to be a place of rest. But we are afraid —afraid of so pure a fellowship—afraid of that high renunciation to which He ever calls us.

There are surely few more pathetic words in the Old Testament than those which the prophet heard: "Have I been a wilderness unto Israel or a land of thick darkness? wherefore do my people say, We are broken loose, we will come no more unto Thee?" What has He done that we should be afraid of Him? Once a father spoke sadly in my hearing. He had studied to make the home interesting to his boy, but had failed. The son's pleasures were all outside in a world of which the parents knew almost nothing. And God has seen this tragic thing happen to His children; their interests are outside His will. As if He had been to them a land of sand and thorns they cry, "We are broken loose, we will come no more to Him." Desperate as the situation is, it would

be far more desperate if we were satisfied. Happily we are not happy. We have not escaped His influence. He follows with inexorable tread down each trodden path until the wilderness which seemed so fair in prospect, chokes us with its sand and heat and we turn—to find Him at our side.

An English preacher of the last century tells of a shepherd standing on the Cheviot Hills with his little son. "The love of God is vast," said the father. He pointed North and South and East and West to indicate its vastness. "It reaches everywhere," he concluded. "Then Father," exclaimed the child, "we must be in the very middle of the love of God." They were both right. We may say "God so loved the world;" we may also say "The Son of God Who loved me and gave Himself for me." The miracle of His love is that each stands at its centre. That was the evangel which Francis Thompson took and proclaimed in his day.

"When men shall say to thee, Lo Christ is here!
When men shall say to thee, Lo Christ is there,
Believe them; yea, and this—then art thou seer
When all thy crying clear
Is but: Lo here! Lo there! ah me, lo everywhere."

IBSEN: "PEER GYNT"

The Ignominy of Half-Heartedness

IBSEN: "PEER GYNT"

THE IGNOMINY OF HALF-HEARTEDNESS

"And when Felix heard these things, having more perfect knowledge of that Way, he deferred them."

"And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee."

Acts xxiv. 22, 25.

THE HISTORIAN of the Acts of the Apostles has devoted much space in his carefully edited records to the portrayal of the complex character of Felix, the Roman Governor at Cæsarea. In doing so he has presented an extraordinarily vivid picture of the spirit of compromise and irresolute wavering by which so many ills have fallen upon our race, and from which few minds are wholly free. It is a most subtle and penetrating description of the soul which refuses to take a stand, of the hesitancy and restlessness which possess the heart without a supreme and abiding loyalty.

We are the more impressed by this picture of

a shifting indeterminate character because, in the narrative, it is placed side by side with that of one of the world's most heroic figures. The life of St. Paul was one of whole-hearted committal to a cause. As we look at the scene the parts shift—the judge becomes a prisoner—while the prisoner stands out in splendid freedom.

The meeting between Paul and Felix was brought about through a false charge of sedition made against the apostle. Felix saw that there was no case against the accused, but instead of acting as justice dictated he began to temporize: "He *deferred* them." The verdict was held in suspense. "When Lysias the chief captain shall come down, I will determine the matter." But Lysias did not come down. Felix did not actually want Lysias to come down—a word from the Governor would have been sufficient summons to the chief captain. What Felix wanted was to avoid decision. He would please both sides if possible, without committing himself to either.

A few days after the trial, Felix came with Drusilla, and, thinking to spend an interesting hour, heard Paul concerning the new faith, which was attracting much attention at that time. There

was no attempt made by Paul that day to equivocate. He preached "of righteousness" to Felix, "of self-control" to Drusilla, and "of the judgment to come" to those whose constant desire was to evade the thought of that last tribunal.

"And Felix was terrified." The chemist, in many of his experiments, must avail himself of the few moments when all the conditions are favourable, if he would secure the result. There are moments in our lives when the elements are favourable to a great decision. Such an hour, by the grace of God, came to Felix when a door was opened by which fears long banished entered his heart afresh. He was compelled to face realities and challenged to decision by a voice which rang like the blast of a trumpet through the defiled corridors and chambers of his life.

But Felix will not go straight. He commences again to hedge; he is determined to be undetermined. "Felix was terrified, and answered, Go thy way for this time, and when I have a convenient season I will call for thee." He thinks that he has not chosen, but, actually, his refusal to choose became a kind of choice having grave consequences of its own. A man might as well

bang the door to in the face of God, as linger outside when he is called to enter.

It has been a perplexity to some expositors how St. Luke, who compressed so greatly in his record of the deeds of the apostles, came to elaborate at such length in his account of this incident. But the more we study the New Testament, the more deeply are we impressed by the frequency of its warning against the terrible misuse of life brought about by half-heartedness and the spirit of vacillation. We are grateful that the historian allowed this chapter to stand complete, for its lesson had still to be learnt. Felix is the perpetual type of "the double-minded man, unstable in all his ways." He was apparently interested in religion, had acquired "more perfect knowledge of the Way," was capable of being emotionally stirred by the preaching of the apostle; but it all came to nothing because he would not commit himself. The appeal of Christ is, in the last resort, to the will; He informs the intellect and stirs the emotions that He may lead us to decision. He would have a man espouse His cause in the world in the scorn of consequence, and stand confronting its enemies with bridges burned be-

hind him and no thought of retreat in his heart.

Christianity has no controversy with Nietzsche when he proclaims his doctrine of "the will to power." On the contrary no more essentially Christian message has been proclaimed to our age. The point at issue is to what end we shall devote these developed resources of our life. Master of phrases as he is, the modern teacher's words are cold and colourless compared with those which fell from our Lord's lips when He urged men to be strong and true. As we read His great appeals and warnings we find that there was no malady of the soul so much dreaded by Him as the weakness born of indecision. He came to create a race of Titans. Men were not to be afraid because kings and judges stood among their opponents; they were not to be deterred because the way was strewn with serpents or blocked by mountains; their faith should enable them to trample danger under foot and to hurl mountains into the sea. He charged men to take the kingdom of heaven by violence, to batter at closed doors until they were opened to their resistless importunity; if their hand offended them they were

to cut it off and cast it from them. He had no place in his kingdom for men who talked but did not perform. He demanded as none other ever did the forceful soul, the decisive will. He warned as none other ever did against the drifting life, the ungirt loin, the unlit lamp. We have read the words of "the Amen" in the Book of Revelation as though they were part of the esoteric teaching of that scripture, forgetting how completely they are in harmony with the timeless teaching of the Jesus of the gospels. "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot." This is not one whit more emphatic than the Master's warning against indolence and half-heartedness, as for example, in His parables of "The Talents," "The Foolish Virgins," and "The Two Sons."

How grotesquely the spirit of Jesus has been misrepresented is made evident to us by the reports of those who have worked as chaplains among our soldiers. We are told that a great number of men identify religion with holding certain beliefs or in abstaining from a few specified evil habits. The insipidity of the Laodicean spirit has not merely lingered through the centuries,

but is actually confounded with that heroic spirit which is its direct antithesis. Christianity is a challenge to the will, a call to heroic action, an appeal to the brave adventurer; it is the apotheosis of chivalry, a clarion call "to live pure, speak true, right wrong, to follow the King."

"And there went great multitudes with Him; and He turned and said unto them, Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." The Master would have no man lose himself in the crowd; each must be himself, true and faithful to the highest that is in him. The only road to individuality is that of self-discipline; the conquering personality always bears the print of the nails. Self-fulfilment and self-denial are phases of the same triumphant life. The grand originality of Christian discipleship is its summons to the will—its call to final and inexorable decision.

There is no more powerful portrayal of this spirit of compromise in modern literature than that of "Peer Gynt" in Ibsen's masterpiece. Peer Gynt is Felix projected into another set of circumstances. Ibsen had some fear that this drama would not be understood outside Scandi-

navia, but there was no occasion for such anxiety. The atmosphere may be local, the character is universal. Every man who studies his own heart will probably find there a clue to the interpretation of Peer Gynt. If we have found deliverance it has only been by stern dealing with our wayward hearts.

"Peer Gynt" is the story of a man who goes out into the world to please himself, whose main object is to escape difficulty, and who carries with him, as a prized portion of his spiritual equipment, sensitive antennæ quick to detect and to shrink from any obstacle which lies in the way. His only method of dealing with such a hindrance is to go around it, a practice in which he at last became so proficient that he made it an open boast. His ingenuity in this art gains him superficial success, so that it is not until late in life that he makes the discovery that a man's true self cannot be found by that method. Self-seeking does not lead, as he had expected it would, to self-fulfilment; on the contrary its destiny is self-annihilation. That in one word is the burden of Ibsen's message in "Peer Gynt."

There is much in the drama which is not so

clear, for various kinds of symbolic figures drawn from the mythologies of Norway appear on the scene and mingle with the human characters as if there were no distinction between them. But there is no missing the central message of "Peer Gynt." Ibsen proclaims that this aimless life is a terrible misuse of the powers which God has entrusted to us, and that its consequence must be the withdrawal of those powers from our care. We are intended to be something strong and true and if we refuse to be this, though we gain the world, we lose our own souls. A man must, he insists, deal with himself and deny himself if he would be himself. He who indulges himself may avoid unpleasant experiences, may get around "the hill difficulty," but he will find his pampered self becoming less and less. To come to selfhood we must climb mountains—meet opposition with no thought of retreat—burn bridges behind us, in a word take up a "cross daily." It is all summed up in our Lord's teaching, "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it, but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's shall save it."

We meet Peer Gynt for the first time as a

young man of twenty summers, a member of a home in needy circumstances. His father, who had been a drunken spendthrift, is dead; his mother, a foolish, fond, garrulous scold, loves the youth but has never disciplined him. Mother and son appear together in the opening scene, and Peer is talking. He is a great talker. Never were such adventures as those he recounts. He has ridden upon the back of a reindeer which leapt with its rider down thousands of feet into a lake. He tells these wild stories because he is bent upon eluding the consequences of his slackness. For six weeks in the busiest season of the year he has been idling on the mountain and now he would escape his mother's biting tongue. "It's a terrible thing to look fate in the eyes," said Ase. That is exactly what her son will not do. He is by no means wholly bad. In certain moods he might have proved a congenial companion, for in youth a love of pleasure and an aversion to anything difficult are by no means infrequent nor do they make for social ostracism. But the refusal to look fate in the face and deal honestly with oneself, unless it is overcome, leads inevitably to ruin.

Peer attends a marriage festival at an adjoining farm, and there he meets Solvejg, the pure and modest girl who is the beautiful element in the story, by whom, at last, he will be led to self-recovery. He is at once attracted by her, but permits himself to be drawn aside by a wild impulse of scorn for those at the wedding who had naturally shrunk from this ragged youth. He carries off Ingrid, the bride, to the mountains, and though he sends her home again, is compelled himself to become an outlaw.

Wandering among the mountains Peer encounters some creatures of modern mythology known in Norway as Trolls. Ibsen uses them as the exponents of absolute selfishness, inhabiting a world in which all moral distinctions have been obliterated. The law of their kingdom is explained by the king:

"Out yonder, under the shining vault,
Among men the saying goes: 'Man, be thyself.'
At home, here with us, 'mid the tribe of the trolls,
The saying goes: 'Troll, to thyself be—
enough.'"

The law of human life is "Be thyself," be true to that which God intended when He gave you

being. Here in the world of lawlessness it is different: "To thyself be enough;" heed nothing but your own pleasures and passions and ambitions. It is a choice which confronts every soul. If we make ourselves the centre of our world, and live only to gratify self we shall cease to live a true human life, and shall sink into this lawless world of the degenerates where:

"Black it seems white, and ugly seems fair,
Big it seems little, and dirty seems clean."

At first Peer Gynt finds an affinity in this lower world, but his better nature is not dead, and seeing the bestiality about it drives him to escape. In this attempt to flee from unbridled self-indulgence he is opposed by another strange mythical being known as the "Great Boyg," a giant figure, shapeless, cold, slippery, elusive, which meets him wherever he turns. The "Great Boyg" represents that element in human nature which has been described by great spiritual teachers under many different metaphors and which every man is made aware of when he strives to be unselfish and true. Whenever the Boyg was challenged to give his name he replied "Myself."

Ibsen portrays the conflict as hard and fierce, for he knew as we know that there is no enemy so powerful in all the engagements of the spirit as that which we find within ourselves. "A man's enemies are those of his own household." Peer was battling with a ghost at which he struck in vain, and which confronted him at every turn. When at last, he asked how he could escape from this kingdom of the Trolls, the "Great Boyg," anxious to keep him there, answered, "Go roundabout, Peer." To which Peer, rescued for the moment by his better nature, answered manfully, "No, through."

Ibsen here enunciates a fundamental law of self-realization. There is no way of attaining selfhood by "going roundabout;" a man must "go through" though the coward in his soul shriek in protest. There is no pleading in the world so persuasive, no threatening so loud and harsh, as that we hear from our lower nature. Something there is within us which we must crucify if we would enter into life. Compromise and vacillation are useless here; a man must strike hard and strike home if he would win through, and escape this dark world of bondage.

There is a devil's voice which counsels "Go round-about" and a Divine voice which charges us "to agonize that we may enter in at the straight gate."

Peer Gynt would never have escaped from the kingdom of the Trolls had there not stolen upon the combatants a sound of Church bells and of psalm-singing in the distance. The Great Boyg shrinks up to nothing at that and gasps: "He was too strong. There were women behind him." Away on the homeland Ase and Solvejg were praying for the wanderer, and their prayers and faith brought him through. There usually is some one behind us when we gain a victory. Peer stands for the man who hardly regards with tolerance the faith of his wife, and, purblind that he is, does not see that his one security is in her prayerful love.

Her love for Peer leads Solvejg to leave her home and come to share his exiled life. He is able to appreciate in some measure this sacred love, and to see that if he accepts it, this must be the supreme passion of his being. He knows also that to possess it, he must himself be changed. It is not sufficient that he flee from the Troll world, he must enter the highest world where

the love of goodness shall be his constant law. Again Peer Gynt is forced to consider the two ways, "the way through" and the "way roundabout." He looks wistfully into the glory of the life to which Solvejg calls him, but he is not prepared to pay the price. "Are you coming?" asks Solvejg. "Roundabout," he answers to himself. He stands, like the young ruler in the gospels, before Incarnate Love, seeing in one rapt moment into the true wealth of the soul, and he also turns away, not without sorrow.

Peer Gynt is not yet prepared to deny himself. He will go roundabout and roundabout until the head is dizzy and the heart faint. At last he will "go through;" but not yet.

Before he leaves the country there comes to him another call to face things as they are. He stands at the bedside of his dying mother. She had been foolish, but her love had never failed him, and his selfishness broke her heart. Ibsen would have us remember that this drifting life has consequences which strike at others. If we drift, we drift as derelict vessels upon the open waters, a perpetual menace to those whose paths cross ours. When we claim that we have a right to

do as we please with our own, let us not forget those joined to us who are not our own. The self-centred life offers others besides itself upon the altar of its own egoistic worship. Peer Gynt was summoned to his mother's death-bed that he might see and understand before he allowed himself to drift further. And he is not without sorrow. He says some very fitting things as he stands there, for talk he must whatever happens, and he sheds a few tears; but everything ends in nothing as we saw in the story of Felix. Peer Gynt checks an emotion before it passes into a volition, and his words are idle as the passing breeze. He makes words and sentiments a substitute for deeds and the door is as good as shut to him for years to come.

Peer Gynt went out into the world—leaving Solvejg on the mountains and his mother's remains to be laid in their last resting place by alien hands—on excellent terms with himself.

When we meet him next he is in middle life and is the possessor of a considerable fortune. He is, we notice, more than ever enamoured of the principle of "going roundabout." That of course we expected. When a man has seen the good and

has deliberately rejected it, preferring to take some easier way, his whole nature is powerfully affected by the choice. Peer Gynt has been coarsened by the years. He makes a boast of that method of life which has actually led him to lower planes of being. We shall not be surprised later to hear the king of the Trolls assure him that though he left their kingdom he had always been faithful to its fundamental law, "To thyself be enough." At present he is seated at dinner surrounded by a number of his associates and as they linger in conversation over the wine, Peer becomes confidential and commits to them the secret of his success:

"The art of bravery in act,
Is this: To stand with choice-free foot
Amid the treacherous snares of life,—
To know for sure that other days
Remain beyond the day of battle,—
To know that ever in the rear
A bridge for your retreat stands open—
This theory has borne me on."

He has always gone roundabout, he has always avoided going through. He is an expert in deferring decisions. He has always kept some

bridge open in the rear. He has committed himself to nothing.

Did conscience trouble him? Had he no scruples? Yes! but his theory has enabled him to deal with all such troublesome thoughts. His money, it appears, has been mostly made

"In negro slaves for Carolina,
And idol images for China."

When the number of his years warned him of the ever approaching day when he must face God's verdict upon his life, he devised an excellent plan for squaring the account so that he may be found neither debtor nor creditor at the opening of the books.

" I shipped off idols every spring,
Each autumn sent forth missionaries
Supplying them with all they needed,
As stockings, Bibles, rum and rice.

For every idol that was sold
They got a coolie well baptised,
So that the effect was neutralised.
The mission field was never fallow
For still the idol propaganda
The missionaries held in check."

He has evidently persuaded himself that this method of which he is so proud will enable him to go "roundabout" the throne of Judgment.

After losing his fortune and wandering in Morocco and Egypt, Peer Gynt returns to Norway. From that point of return we have the record of his disillusionment. The ship is wrecked and he finds himself clinging to an upturned boat on the angry waters. He is joined there by "a strange passenger" who is really Peer's better self, the self God intended when He gave him being, and there, with only a few spars separating him from a grave in the deep, he has a glimpse of the kind of man he had become. Drowning men, when rescued, have sometimes told of the vivid recollections of their past life which came to them crowded into the compass of a few seconds, as they hovered between life and death. Peer Gynt saw not merely what he had been, but what he might have been had he to himself been faithful. Mr. William Archer declares that he was "convicted of sin" on that frail raft. That is, perhaps, true. He certainly heard the deeper voices of his own neglected spirit. And yet the old habit returns. He defers de-

cision. He is more anxious for bodily safety than for the recovery of his best self.

Saved from the seas Peer can find no deliverance from questions which go down to the bases of his soul. What has he done with his life? Has he done anything at all? He can point to nothing.

"Figments, dreams, and still-born knowledge
Lay the pyramid's foundation;
O'er them shall the work mount upwards,
Earnest shunned, repentance dreaded."

That is how it all seems as he strives to look deeply into his own life, and somehow in spite of himself and his theories, he cannot help looking. His world is full of complaints and reproaches, and he hears sounds like those of children weeping.

The thread-balls on the ground of the blasted heath on which he wanders, in the lone dark night, cry:

"We are thoughts;
Thou shouldst have thought us."

The withered leaves flying before the wind accuse him:

"We are a watchword;
Thou shouldst have proclaimed us."

The sighing of the wind takes up the reproach:

"We are songs;
Thou shouldst have proclaimed us."

The Dewdrops dripping from the branches of the charred tree trunks say:

"We are tears
Unshed for ever."

The broken straws at his feet complain:

"We are deeds;
Thou shouldst have achieved us."

And even Ase's sad voice is heard far away:

"You've driven me the wrong way."

As he flees from these accusing voices Peer Gynt is met, at the cross-roads, by a symbolical messenger of Divine judgment called the "Button Moulder." In childhood Peer used to mould buttons in a ladle, and when a button was poorly cast he would fling it into the melting pot to be cast afresh. The Button Moulder carries with

him a huge ladle into which he has been charged by his Divine Master to cast the souls which have never realised their Maker's design, have made no use of the powers entrusted to their care.

"Now you were designed for a shining button,
On the vest of the world; but your loop gave way;
So into the paste box you needs must go,
And then, as they phrase it, be merged in the mass."

It is a fantastic statement of the ultimate significance of our life, that it really is an investment of the Maker. The human spirit is not a finished creation: it is something to be made by effort and sacrifice. Character is a spiritual production moulded out of the thoughts, passions, and aptitudes of life.

And here we find one of the most daring conceptions of the drama. An evil character, declares the Button Moulder, which has sinned boldly and resolutely is like the negative of a photograph in which lines are reversed and bright is turned to dark. But yet, by the use of stringent acids and scalding solutions we may, from the negative

likeness, obtain a positive. So the fiery judgments of God may, hereafter, effect transformation in a sinful character. But what can be made of the plate which bears no image at all? Peer's theory has ended in neutrality: search his life through and through and there is found nothing at all: the plate bears no image upon which acids can take effect. He has played off one impulse against another and has neutralised everything. He protests with all his soul against annihilation, this "Gynt cessation" as he terms it. To which the Button Moulder replies:

"Bless me, my dear Peer, there is surely no need
To get so wrought up about trifles like this,
Yourself you have never been at all;
Then what does it matter, your dying right out."

Concerning which thought about the future Ibsen might have quoted against his critics the words, "Because thou art lukewarm I will spew thee out of my mouth."

Peer Gynt does not seek further to plead innocence. His sins, he openly confesses, are many and black. But he does strive to prove that he has made *something* of himself. He fails, how-

ever, to produce any evidence of having stood committed to a deed with all its issues; he can point to no moment when he stood bravely upon the field of conflict with towering flames behind him announcing that he had burnt his bridges.

Baffled in this quest Peer turns to the Button Moulder at another of the cross-roads and asks:

"One question, just one.
What is it, at bottom, this being oneself?"

The reply is very significant and should be interpreted in the light of the New Testament.

"To be oneself is: to slay oneself
. . . to stand forth everywhere
With Master's intention displayed like a sign-board."

The life of self-restraint will make evident to the world the Divine purpose placed within the soul. It was so that Jesus taught, for after saying to his hearers, "If any man will come after me let him deny himself," He adds, "For whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words . . . of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed (Mark viii, 34, 38).

With his life tumbling about him into ruins Peer Gynt returns to Solvejg, the woman who had loved him and had believed in him through all the sad years of his wandering, and who, though she is now old and blind, had never doubted that he would come back to her. He thought that she might tell the tale of his cruel rejection of her and show how once, at all events, he did something which might be submitted to his Judge. But she has no charge against Peer; on the contrary she affirms that the love he had awakened in her heart was its priceless possession and joy.

And then when hope was dead within him, the dayspring rose upon Peer Gynt through Solvejg's faith and love. Perhaps, he thinks, she could tell what had become of that ideal self, which she must have seen once, and which she had loved through all the years.

PEER GYNT, "Canst thou tell where Peer Gynt has been since we parted?

SOLVEJG, "Been?"

PEER GYNT, "With his destiny's seal on his brow
Been, as in God's thought he first sprang forth,

Canst thou tell me? If not I must
get home,—
Go down to the mist-shrouded
regions."

SOLVEJG (smiling), "Oh, that riddle is easy."

PEER GYNT, "Then tell me what thou knowest!
Where was I, as myself, as the
whole man, the true man?
Where was I, with God's sigil upon
my brow?"

SOLVEJG, "In my faith, in my hope, and in my
love."

PEER GYNT, (starting back)
"What sayest thou——? Peace!
These are juggling words.
Thou art mother thyself to the man
that's there.

SOLVEJG, "Ay, that I am, but who is his father?
Surely he that forgives at the
mother's prayer."

The drama concludes with that one hope. The true self is that which is seen by love, and if, now, Peer Gynt will yield himself to love's faith, there may yet be seen the man of destiny, a crown of joy to his Maker for evermore. The Buttor Moulder cries from behind the house,

"At the last cross-road we will meet again, Peer."

That is so. Each must submit to the verdict of the Judge at the last cross-road. But Solvejg sings louder her inspired hope:

> *"I will cradle thee, I will watch thee,*
> *Sleep and dream then, dear, my boy."*

Some things remain to be said as we conclude our study.

a. Ibsen does not tell how we may find that high ideal which should be expressed in our lives. Confronted by the question, indeed, he suggests that not to be able to recognize your better self is itself an evidence of moral failure. True as that is, it does not help the man who would now aim at self-fulfilment. When we say "Be thyself" we cannot forget the possibility of our mistaking some impulse for the self God intended. The fact is we have need of direction in this most difficult of all the arts—the art of life: "If only the moral law could become incarnate!" exclaimed the ancient teacher of Athens. We need some manifestation of God's thought con-

cerning human life. And Jesus stands there, the central and peerless figure in history, in Whom we find a perpetual protest against unworthy views of life—an endless inspiration to all who would live in harmony with the Divine Will. If we follow Him we shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life. The glory of the Christian ideal lies in the fact that it is radiated from a life and not a precept. No man can better obey the highest law of his own life than by obedience to that Holy Spirit we have seen and loved in Christ.

b. Very urgent is Ibsen's message that self-realisation is conditioned by self-denial. Fitzgerald was anxious to have Carlyle leave London: "I tried to persuade him to leave the accursed den; and he wished—but, but—perhaps he did not wish on the whole." That is what we find when we command ourselves to leave some cherished evil; something breaks out into rebellion or, at least, opposes the weight of its own inertia to the proposed departure. Life's severest conflicts take place within the mind and must be fought to a finish without any human onlookers to cheer and help. Compromise here means defeat; half-

heartedness is fatal. The coward voice must be stifled, the lower self which craves for ease and comfort be denied, if we would be true to God and to ourselves.

c. There is redeeming power in human love, but it is slight compared with that immeasurable redemption which is ours in the Immortal Love of Christ. He comes "hoping all things, believing all things, enduring all things." He never despairs. Life is worth what His love esteems it. The measure of human value is not in the self which is apparent, but in that deeper self which abides in His faith. "I went to Newgate prison," notes John Wesley in his "Journals," "and preached the gospel to the condemned felons." He had a right to do so, for he represented the only love in the Universe which never loses hope. The Church, like Solvejg, should keep the light burning in the home until the wanderer return; and must continually replenish her dependent flame at the Redeemer's faith and love.

JOHN RUSKIN: "THE SEVEN LAMPS OF ARCHITECTURE"

A Proclamation Of The Laws of Life

JOHN RUSKIN: "THE SEVEN LAMPS OF ARCHITECTURE"

A PROCLAMATION OF THE LAWS OF LIFE

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
And light unto my path."

PSALM CXIX. 105.

"For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?"

LUKE XIV. 28.

OUR LORD would have us sit down and count the cost before we commit ourselves to the building of character. Evil beclouds the issues, and practises endless sophistry and subterfuge to enlist an espousal of its cause. The long view of life is one of the tempter's most dreaded enemies. Christ stands in the open, concealing nothing, distorting nothing. He places a cross at the heart of His appeal for discipleship.

We are called to build, from the deep foundations laid in silence within the soul, upward through thought and purpose and deed, gathering

material from each experience, until at last, the spiritual structure stands in the light, beyond the power of assault from without or treachery from within its walls, "a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

Life is a process—not a finished creation. We have ample material entrusted to us for the making of character in the powers and faculties of our nature; and, in the deep mystery of God's Will, it is allowed to each to make almost any use he pleases of that endowment. One labours, through all the days, to fashion for himself and of himself a market-place, where each thoroughfare and centre bears the impress of buying and selling; another builds a sanctuary, which has "for weary feet the gift of peace;" others are inchoate and inconsistent as if to-day they meant one thing, to-morrow another. The soul that has no abiding loyalties, but alters to suit the altering tastes of each day, is like an architect, who should change his plans to please each passing whim or caprice of his own mind.

It is a perilous situation to have no guiding laws and principles of Soul-Architecture. In "The Seven Lamps of Architecture," John Rus-

kin records a conversation with Mulready, wherein he asked the famous artist by what means a certain effect of colour was most easily obtained. The reply was concise and comprehensive: "Know what you have to do, and do it." That is true of all kinds of success, and supremely true of soul-building. It is precisely what we are summoned to do, by our Lord, in this parable. We must know what we wish to be and do; we should be able to write down on paper the purpose and aim of our being. And yet how rarely is thought given to the plan of life. Many people devote more attention to the building of some outhouse for the storing of garden utensils, or to the fashioning of a garage, than they give to the architecture of their own personality. It is because this "Art of Life" has been so little considered, that we find such vast stores of wasted material—thoughts, imagination, passions, volitions,—which have been incorporated into no finished structure. Speaking of Oliver Goldsmith, Dr. Johnson once said: "He would be a great man if he realised the wealth of his internal resources." That is true of many. The misused powers of life do not constitute so great

a tragedy as those which have been unused. We need some guiding hand, some controlling mind, to make us our real selves.

In order to help us to face this ultimate question of life, we turn to one of the great prophetic teachers of the last century. We are about to commemorate the first centenary of John Ruskin's birth, and many attempts will be made to estimate the influence of that noble mind upon the literature, art, and social progress, of the English-speaking peoples. There are few whose power so completely escapes definition. We are all, in some ways, under his influence, whether we are aware of it or not. His spirit lives beyond his books, and works in the minds of many who could scarcely name their titles.

The supreme interest of Ruskin was the making of manhood. "There is no wealth but life: life, including all its powers of love, of joy, and admiration." "The great cry which rises from all our manufacturing cities, louder than the furnace blast, is all in very deed for this, that we manufacture there everything except men. We blanch cotton, and strengthen steel, and refine sugar, and shape pottery; but to brighten, to strengthen, to

refine, or to form a single living spirit, never enters into our estimate of advantages." Such sayings fell like thunderbolts upon respectable society. Great publishing houses refused to sanction the articles in which they first appeared. But ideas will not be stifled, and ever since, they have fertilised English thought.

Sick at heart because of all this vast waste of human life, Ruskin turned to study the laws by which the foundations of buildings are made firm, towers and domes massive and beautiful; and discovered that those same laws are the safeguards against the manifold forms of human error, and the sources of every measure of success. He brought men, by his discoveries, to study the Art of Architecture at its root, "in human hope and human passion." The Laws enunciated he terms "The Seven Lamps of Architecture," borrowing the metaphor from the words of the Psalmist in that great literature of which he was so reverent and profound a student, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet."

The mission of this book—for it is essentially a book with a mission—was twofold. It was directed in the first place to the world of art, and

proclaimed, with its incomparable elevation of style and lucidity of thought, the passionate gospel of truth, sacrifice, obedience, beauty, and life, as essentials of all lasting work. But it has had a much wider audience. These seven laws, which govern the great masterpieces of human genius, are also the very nerve of those changeless principles which condition the happiness, security, and strength of human character. We read of cathedrals and cloisters, of gates and walls, and find ourselves rediscovering the great ideals which have shone, like guiding stars, upon the perplexed ways of life. Unconsciously, man has expressed himself in his work. The rootage of art is within the soul of the artist. "There is one God" declared the inspired writer: the worship of that one God fashions all a man does. That is Ruskin's message. He found that even mechanical things, and things deemed indifferent, depend, for their perfection, upon the acknowledgment of those principles of faith, truth, and obedience, which God has revealed in His word for our guidance. And so the message, written in the first instance for the world of art, broadens out into universal application.

We are living, as John Ruskin lived, in days that are sombre and full of misgiving. This is no time for men to spend hours in idle contemplation of ancient stones or obsolete laws. The vast disasters which have overtaken us demand our utmost thought and strength in the task of reconstruction. Grief burdens the hearts of many; human need has taken to itself a thousand voices all of which cry for help. We cannot afford to wander pensively among ancient buildings or to make a profitless study of dead and mouldering walls, while the real world about us is threatened with dissolution. But, if we can learn from such study how temples and lordly palaces fell without the sacrilegious hand of despoilers, because they had, from their first inception, falsehood and disobedience within their stones and upon their decorations; or, if we find those which abide the passing of the years in strength and beauty, because they were conceived and fashioned in harmony with laws of life which are binding upon us as upon them; then may we return to our task in the world, with a strengthened and more compelling certainty that, though we have built amiss in life heretofore, yet is there a way by which

we may fashion a City of God that abideth forever. This is the lesson Ruskin would have us learn from all our forms of education. "You do not educate a man by telling him what he knew not, but by making him what he was not." Our study has to do with life, not with things.

A notorious cynic, speaking of that distinguished man, whose loss is deplored by us as by our friends across the border, once said that Theodore Roosevelt * was to be congratulated on his discovery of the Ten Commandments. The statement was a real contribution to our understanding of that forceful personality. His strength was not in subtlety of brain or ingenuity of intrigue; it was an expression of timeless and primal laws of life. We shall discover "no new commandments" in Ruskin's Seven Lamps, but, "those we have heard from the beginning." There will, however, be lustrous fidelities, and unconquerable integrities, in the humblest life kindled into redeeming passion by these lamps of glowing light.

* This lecture was delivered a few days after Theodore Roosevelt's death.

THE LAMP OF SACRIFICE

"ALL OLD work nearly has been hard work," declared Ruskin. "It may be the hard work of children, of barbarians, of rustics; but it is always their utmost." Turning to the great works of genius, he found, in the fair fronts of variegated mosaic charged with wild fancies and dark hosts of imagery, in vaulted gates, in pinnacles and diademed towers, what vast burdens men endured for their faith. "All else for which the builders sacrificed has passed away—all their living interests and aims and achievements. We know not for what they laboured, and we see no evidence of their reward. But of them, and their life and their toil upon the earth, one reward, one evidence, is left to us in those gray heaps of deep-wrought stones. They have taken with them to the grave their powers, their honours, and their errors; but they have left us their adoration."

Great and precious as is the bequest made to us in their work, still greater and more precious was the spiritual quality wrought in the builders themselves by their devotion. Life without

sacrifice is like some dark tower unrelieved by cheerful flame, a haunt of gloom and discontent. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels and have not love, I am become as sounding brass." Who desires to hear one speak, if, behind an eloquent tongue, there lies a selfish heart? "And though I have the gift of prophecy and understand all knowledge, and though I have all faith, and have not love, I am nothing." This loveless creed is religion's perpetual stumbling block. "And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing." The man, who gives from some selfish motive, may help others by his gift, he leaves, unrelieved, the dreadful poverty of his own heart. Sacrifice is the law of life.

Human nature is so constituted that not one of us can do his true work in the world without putting forth all his powers. There are coward spirits within which crave for ease and self-indulgence, and from which there can be no deliverance save by crucifixion. The War has shown us the high capacity of average human nature, when held by the splendid compulsion of a great ideal. The dark fields of battle have had upon

them this ray of light. Shall we then, now that peace has come, turn—and blow out that light which God kindled within our hearts? We are confronted by new difficulties: never was the need of sacrifice greater than to-day. Self-assertion threatens to wreck the whole fabric of our social system, leaving nothing behind but chaos. We refuse, however, to believe that human nature can only be acted upon by selfish considerations. Such statements might have been listened to before the war; they cannot be accepted by those who have seen men and women sacrifice life with no hope of selfish gain. Christ's glorious faith in man has been abundantly justified before our eyes. If only we maintain the spirit which brought us through the dark days of the great conflict, we shall erect an enduring fabric, cemented by sacrificial blood. There is no other way. Society cannot be held together by ingenious adaptations of the much-vaunted doctrine of "enlightened selfishness," nor by what Edmund Burke termed, "the small arts of great statesmen." Christ's law of sacrifice is the human law, and abides in the nature of things. His cross shines across the centuries, proclaiming the

fact that every son of man comes into the world, "not to be ministered unto, but to minister."

THE LAMP OF TRUTH

STUDYING THE ruins of ancient structures, Ruskin found some which had perished before their time was come. It was not the robber, nor the fanatic, nor the blasphemer, who had torn down the walls—leaving only a few arches and silent aisles behind as an evidence of their former greatness. They had perished, because the builders had put "lying stones" into their foundations, embedded a falsehood into the building. The years inevitably discovered the hidden breach of integrity, and the rain and hail "destroyed the refuge of lies."

Lamenting over these scenes of desolation, the seer warns us against "lying," and especially against that lie which goes deeper than word or deed, the falsehood which covers itself in glistering robes, which assumes the garb of prudence or friendship, patriotism or religion. We live in a *real* world, and if we try to live in one that is not real, some stern fact will ultimately explode

our glittering dreams. The damnation of Phariseeism was "the greater" because its falsehood was out of sight; it was among the foundations; it was enclosed within the walls which appeared so strong. The Pharisee lied to God, and to himself. How then could he escape? His righteousnesses and his prayers were screens for inward insincerities. The vast structure fell to pieces because of its unreality. "God requires truth in the inward parts." Nothing short of that will avail. Truth is a quality of life; not merely of words or deeds.

THE LAMP OF POWER

"AN ARCHITECT," declares our author, "should live as little in cities as a painter. Send him to our hills, and let him study there what Nature understands by a buttress, and what by a dome." He must have power in his work, and, "not shrivelled precision, or starved accuracy, or formalised deformity."

We are reminded of the words of the Psalmist, "I will lift up mine eyes to the hills." Our human standards are small and cramped; they

leave the soul dwarfed. When we "lift up our eyes" and see Jesus, there is revealed to us the unconquerable might of a devoted human will. Undeterred by all the world-forces, He moved forward to his goal with the inevitableness of the sun's procession through the heavens. The world has too rarely seen the might of Christian character. Reading the "Life of Nietzsche" we do not find any one about him in his early years who conveys the impression of the forcefulness of faith; he dwelt among spiritual pigmies, and so came to identify the Christian spirit with cowardice and weakness. But there is no strength like that which is ours when we are Christ's, when He apprehends us and sends us forth "from prudent turret and redoubt" to take our part in the warrior's great debate of arms. He has created a hero of the coward and enabled weak souls to stand "like Tenerife or Atlas unremoved." In the days of the St. Bartholomew massacres Bernard Palissy was flung into prison and there visited by Charles IX. "Unless you recant," said the king, "I shall be *forced* to deliver you to death." "I cannot be forced," returned Palissy, "I can die, and therefore I am free. Simple

potter as I am, neither you, nor the nation, can force me to worship a falsehood."

THE LAMP OF BEAUTY

RUSKIN DOES not attempt to tell us what beauty is; it is best defined when left undefined. Very earnestly, however, does he exhort us to learn from Nature that beauty is something within, which strikes outward by its own inherent vitality. Let the marble express a true thought with intensity and strength, turning away from all that is impure and vicious, and it will break out into the glow of beauty. There may be no magnificence, for beauty is not splendour, but there is a quality, in the union of sacrifice, truth and power, which falls upon the mind with a satisfaction akin to that which comes through the beauty of a flower or the song of a bird.

The Bible calls this quality, "the beauty of holiness." It declares that wholeness of life and soundness of character will blossom into beauty. We have still no words which describe more adequately the effect left upon our minds by the spectacle of a chivalrous life, than those which are

derived from the realm of beauty. A man does a generous deed, and we say he acted "handsomely." He is courteous and kind, not merely on state occasions but at all times; and to describe the impression made upon us, we go to the laws of beauty. An "ugly" deed suggests the opposite effect. There are characters which move us in the same way as some great picture or a fair scene in Nature. Magnanimity, reverence, justice, self-sacrifice are forms and expressions of the changeless Beauty of the Universe. Meanness, overreaching, falsehood, trickery are *ugly* things; they jar upon the soul like a discordant note in music. God gives beauty to holiness. It is an outcome of life, not something added to the surface. It is a creation of the heart. When we pass the beauty of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who was the "fairest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely" through the spectrum of life, we find just such qualities as holiness includes and all may possess—justice, self-control, mercifulness, patience, courage, hopefulness, and trust.

SADDEST OF all the chapters is that on "Dead Architecture." By that Ruskin does not mean, as he carefully points out, "coarse cutting, nor blunt cutting, but cold cutting—the look of equal trouble everywhere—the smooth diffused tranquillity of heartless pains—the regularity of a plough in a level field." It is work done without heart, by hands soulless as some machine. The chill is more frequently felt in finished work, "for men cool and tire as they complete."

Once again we are reminded of our Lord's dread of mechanism in religion, when ceremonies and sacrifices and prayers are offered with monotonous regularity, but all without the deep throb and splendid passion of life. Bring to Him the rough work and He will be patient—bring the blundering work and He will not chide; but heartless service He will not accept. The widow's mite was worth more to Him than all the "icily regular" donations of wealthy Pharisees, because it was spiritualised by her heart's devotion. "He came that we might have life and that we might have it more abundantly."

THE LAMP OF MEMORY

IN A noble passage, Ruskin illustrates how much of Nature's appeal to the mind is derived from her human associations. Standing under the spell of a scene, above the village of Champagnole, in the Jura, he endeavoured to imagine it placed in some aboriginal forest of the New Continent and immediately the glory departed and left the mind blank and chill. "Those ever springing flowers and ever flowing streams had been dyed by the deep colours of human endurance, valour, and virtue; and the crests of the sable hills that rose against the evening sky received a deeper worship, because their far shadows fell eastward over the iron walls of Joux and the four-square keep of Granson."

Architecture should be the protectress of this sacred influence of memory. It is for her "to render the art of our day historical, and to preserve, as the most precious of inheritances, that of past ages." He must be strangely constituted, who does not feel the appeal of the past, brooding like some mysterious spirit amid the structures that stand as monuments of the strength and

faith of other days. One day lives in my memory when, having stood in Westminster Abbey among

"The dead, but sceptred sovereigns, who still rule
Our spirits from their urns"

I passed into the prayer-room of John Wesley, at City Road. The Cathedral is a superb majesty embodied in stone; the sanctuary of the great evangelist stands bare and unadorned; but in each there shone the radiant lamp of memory throwing its hallowing light upon our wistful minds.

Gilbert Chesterton complained that Ruskin was interested in every part of the cathedral except the Altar. The true statement is that he found the Altar everywhere. All places had been sanctified by human prayers and tears, by the adoration and faith of many generations.

Memory should lead us not merely to guard the inheritance which is ours to hold in trust for the future; it should also inspire us to live after such a fashion as shall make the temples in which we worship, and the homes in which we dwell, hallowed to the generations that are to be. It

is well that we should place, in the cities and towns of Canada, some memorial, in enduring stone, of those who have made the great sacrifice, so that, in coming days, when children ask "What mean these stones?" teachers and parents may tell of the chivalrous lives and heroic deeds wrought by the manhood and womanhood of our own time.

If human association can give such moving power to scenes of Nature and fabrics of stone, how much greater the appeal of memory to the architect of character. The Lamp of Memory casts its light back upon the soul's birth and uprising, upon the dawning of responsibility, upon fierce battles fought on its broad plains, upon sorrows endured, and sins washed in scalding tears, upon "pulses of nobleness and aches of shame." It reveals the coming of the Great Lover Who sought us for His own, "by His Agony and bloody Sweat, by His precious Death and Burial, by His glorious Resurrection and Ascension and by the coming of the Holy Ghost." It flashes upon our minds the amazing truth that God seeks this redeemed soul for His Temple and dwelling-place.

Powerful indeed becomes the appeal of Memory in Soul Architecture. If we cherish the palaces and homes of our mighty dead, how much more carefully should we guard with reverence the abode of a living God. If we walk softly where the utterance of human genius was once heard, or some voice of prayer became potent in the history of nations, should we not stand with feet unshod where God utters His word, where the Holy Spirit intercedes "with groanings that cannot be uttered"? "We are not our own; we are bought with a price."

THE LAMP OF OBEDIENCE

THE ARCHITECT is a man under authority. He may build freely only when he has learned to obey. There is no such thing in the Universe as the license which men have miscalled Liberty. "The stars have it not; the earth has it not; the sea has it not; and we men have the mockery and semblance of it only for our heaviest punishment." If the builder has not been loyal to the laws of Nature, then will the building be hurled to ruin by inexorable powers. Gravitation

does not speak; it acts. The young architect must lay aside all pride and frenzied ambition and become as a little child if he would afterwards be free to build his lofty vault and airy pinnacle. In the soul's domain also obedience leads to liberty. "One is your Master even Christ." We are to learn of Him "for He is meek and lowly of heart." Within His laws we may build heaven-aspiring temples, death-defying towers; but without, all ends in impotence, futility, and destruction.

With these lamps of Soul Architecture to guide us we return to our Lord's appeal. Now that we have considered the task, He charges us further to face frankly the question whether we have, in ourselves, resources adequate to its completion. These laws are to be embodied in our lives. We must deny those recreant voices which plead for indulgence; we must be strong not merely to build, but also to protect the structure from outward assault and inward betrayal; we must have that fulness of life which in its manifestation becomes moral beauty; we must be true to the mighty past, and to that unborn future to which each of us is indissolubly joined. Are we

sufficient of ourselves to accomplish these things? Can we bring every thought into the obedience of Jesus Christ? On Calton Hill, Edinburgh, there are a few arches standing; a pathetic survival of the work of one who began to build, but was not able to complete the structure he had fashioned in his mind. It is the voice of Wisdom then which cries to us across the centuries that we count the cost, whether we have sufficient to finish life's great enterprise, for many there are who have fainted and become weary, contenting themselves with the work of a few earnest years.

Our Lord challenges us in this way, not that we should stand discouraged before a task beyond our strength, but that we should turn to Him for our sufficient equipment. He sees, with the deep-reaching vision of love and faith, the finished creation of each life; sees its glorious possibilities realised in foundations strong and true, in massive walls of righteousness, in domes of prayer and leaping spires of aspiration and praise; and sees all this where we see only masses of material lying unused about our wearied souls. There is a striking passage in the book of Isaiah

which has been in my mind through all this study. "Lo, upon both palms have I graven thee; thy walls are before me continually." The exiles in Babylon were invited to return to their own land. But what was there to which they could return? No wonder their hearts failed them as they pictured the scene of ruin. It was to them the prophet proclaimed his message. There was a custom in the East of tattooing upon the skin some dear name one wished to keep in mind, and it was this fashion God attributed to Himself. But He exceeds the human habit. It is the picture, not the name, of Zion which is written upon His hands; and not the picture only of what she was in her desolation, but as she would be in her restored and perfected state. As Dr. George Adam Smith puts it in a suggestive sentence, "Reality is not what we see; reality is what God sees." He sees walls where we see ruins.

And those strong hands upon which our names are engraved will help to shape each life. "Ye are God's building," declared the apostle. Builder of worlds as He is there is no work nearer His heart than this of fashioning character. He abides within us proclaiming those principles which are

essential to permanence, reinforcing human power, controlling and unifying the manifold activities of our lives, with the vast patience of Infinite love and hope. Not until the scaffolding of the body falls away shall we see how strong and beautiful Christ can make a life surrendered to Him.

"Therefore to Whom turn I but to Thee, the ineffable name?
Builder and Maker Thou, of houses not made with hands!"

The Divine Maker seeks material out of which He can create this house eternal in the heavens. "We are his workmanship," declared the apostle, using a word which suggests that Christian character stands related to God, as a poem to its author. A Cathedral has sometimes appeared to us as a poem in stone; but earth's sublimest poetry is a human life through which God utters the eternal music of righteousness and love. Our poetry is but dull prose compared with this.

At the close of his essay on "Principles" Mark Rutherford writes down his confession: "I only speak my own experience; I am not talking theology or philosophy. I know what I am say-

ing, and can point out the times and places when I should have fallen if I had been able to rely for guidance upon nothing better than a commandment or deduction. But the pure, calm, heroic figure of Jesus confronted me, and I succeeded. I had no doubt as to what He would have done, and through Him I did not doubt what I ought to do." That experience is confirmed by multitudes. It has been stated in many ways but it is always essentially the same. Our life is so constituted that it needs more than principles for its completion. It has no more indubitable sign of its high kinship than this; it needs Another to be itself. Independence is failure. As surely as the farmer does most when he gives Nature an opportunity to produce his wheat, so do we build most securely when we allow the Divine Maker of all strength and beauty to lay His Almighty yet most tender hands upon the powers which make our lives. Human dignity is found in the greatness of its need: "When I am weak then am I strong." Who could speak thus save a son of God?

TENNYSON: "IN MEMORIAM"

A Poet's Plea for Faith

TENNYSON: "IN MEMORIAM"

A POET'S PLEA FOR FAITH

"I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will look forth to see what He will speak with me, and what I shall answer concerning my complaint. And the Lord answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for the appointed time, and it hasteth toward the end, and shall not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not delay. Behold . . . the just shall live by his faith."

HABAKKUK II. 1-4.

THE WORDS from this ancient prophecy describe very vividly the mission which God gave to Alfred Tennyson in the nineteenth century. Standing upon his watch-tower in an age charged with perplexities and questionings, seeing with open eyes the misgivings, the anxieties, the despair of his generation, he, like that ancient prophet, proclaimed deliverance by faith.

It is the custom in Edinburgh for four buglers to blow out the "Last Post" each evening from the Castle. There was a legend, that lingered late

among some of the citizens, that long ago, one of the buglers was murdered at the place of duty; and it was believed, that on the last day in March, the anniversary of the crime, after the buglers had sounded their call, those who listened might hear another peal—the summons of the ghostly bugler. Amid the many challenging cries of the last century, there was heard, from time to time, the voice of some one who stood upon his tower and sounded a call from the hid battlements of Eternity. God did not leave Himself without a witness. The trumpet note of a spiritual bugler fell upon men's hearts, as they stood amid the gathering shades of evening and felt the dark night near. If no age was more fiercely assailed by doubts and fears, none was more richly endowed with prophetic ministries. The most authoritative voices of the century challenged the hearts of men to believe. Among their number stood Tennyson, raised to high eminence that he might speak this ancient word to the men of his own day. "In Memoriam" is a call from one standing on his watch-tower, who had tarried for the vision, and who now proclaimed the changeless message of God, "the just shall live by faith."

Tennyson has a message for those who have been caught in that whirl of endless questionings, which is one of the characteristics of our time. As you read the poem, you are at once made aware of a mind that understands. We are not likely to be helped by a doctor who does not believe in the reality of our complaint. There are some who have treated the misgivings of the mind as unreal. Others have gone to the opposite extreme denouncing doubt as if it were a heinous sin. We all remember the manner in which that saintly man Keble met Coleridge: "I have found that men who have any doubt about the inspiration of Scripture are usually too wicked to be reasoned with." These unshadowed hearts are precious to the Church, but they have small power to deal with the mood of unbelief; a mood which has fallen upon some as sincere as themselves.

"In Memoriam" may be taken as a transcript of the mentality of the age in which it was composed. It could have belonged to no other time. We find here the phases of that age reflected—its hopes and fears, its questions and answers, its insinuations and protests, its misgivings and confidences, its despair and triumphant hopes. It must not

be imagined that the poet takes no side. He does most emphatically range himself on the side of those great souls through all the ages who have believed in the authority of the spiritual impulses and primitive hopes of the human soul. But he presents the two views, one superficial though plausible, assumed by men who proclaim matter and force as the be-all and end-all; another, deeper and truer, which declares that to understand Nature at all, you must take the soul of man into account. It is because of this openness and sensitiveness of mind that Tennyson is able to help those who are shadowed by the intangible spectres of doubt which appal so many earnest souls. He has seen and felt the power of unbelief, and has emerged into the light. He is like some bold aviator, who has passed through the encircling clouds of the heavens into the sunshine above and beyond. The billowing mists are beneath, and he is conscious of them to the last; he sees those deep gulfs of gloom from which he has escaped, but journeys in the light and is unafraid. Our fears are expressed in words which unbelief has borrowed because of their vividness; but there is the answer of faith, clear, persuasive,

and with wonderful power over our unsteadied minds. Clouds and darkness are beneath. The sun shines constant in the heavens above.

All this we may find in "In Memoriam," which is perhaps the greatest religious poem of the nineteenth century. It was a monument, in the first instance, to a departed friend. Arthur Hallam was one of Tennyson's contemporaries at Cambridge, and there the friendship was born which was destined to be so nobly commemorated in English literature. His was a singularly gifted life, capable, so his friends all declared, of the greatest achievements. Gladstone's appreciation of Hallam, published in the "Companion Classics," confirms all that Tennyson claims for this brother of his soul. One passage from the moving tribute may be quoted. "It is the simple truth that Arthur Henry Hallam was a spirit so exceptional, that everything with which he was brought into relation during his shortened passage through this world came to be, through this contact, glorified by a touch of the ideal. Among his contemporaries at Eton, that queen of visible homes for the ideal schoolboy, he stood supreme among all his fellows; and the long life through

which I have since wound my way, and which has brought me into contact with so many men of rich endowments, leaves him where he then stood as to natural gifts, so far as my estimation is concerned." And Hallam died when, it would seem, his work had scarcely been commenced. These brilliant gifts were hardly revealed before they were withdrawn. "In Vienna's fatal walls," while he was travelling with his father, "God's finger touched him and he slept."

In his "Life of Tennyson" the poet's son writes: "The death of Hallam left my father under a cloud, which for a long time blotted out all joy from his life and made him long for death." This numbness of soul was followed by doubts which were born of grief. "What did it mean? What had become of his friend? Did not God care? Where was Love in this tragedy? Was death the end?" The questions poured in upon him from every aspect of recovered life, and though at first the answers tarried, yet at last they came in soul-redeeming vision. "In Memoriam" utters "the deeper voice across the storm," proclaiming that "All is well."

The answer is that of the watchman on his

tower, not that of the schoolman amid his syllogisms. Tennyson falls back upon faith, which is as essential a quality of the soul as reason, and declares that we must interpret the world in terms of those primary laws of human life by which men are distinguished from the brute creation.

This point is so important and so essential for an understanding of the poem, that we must pause here to ask the question, How far is it justifiable to answer the riddle of the world by the "truths deep-seated in our mystic frame"? Are we, as some suggest, guilty of any abrogation of reason by a final acceptance, through an act of faith, of those moral and spiritual laws which are so interwoven with our own personal life? Tennyson declared, "I believe in God not from what I see in Nature but from what I find in man." The Nature to which he referred is that which is portrayed in scientific text-books as a system of mechanical forces, acting and reacting within a fixed system. How far that study might lead us into faith in an unseen Power it is not necessary for us to determine. The fact is, that Nature does not complete itself in this material organisation. Out of its central mystery life has emerged, and

through life, at last, the *human soul.* To attempt to form any theory of the world without recognising human personality as a fact, would be like offering a criticism of some drama after witnessing only the opening scene.* The mind of man is as real and as essential a part of the nature of things as is the sun or the law of gravitation. Two spectacles filled the mind of Immanuel Kant with awe; the first, that of the starry skies, almost annihilating man by the sense of their vastness; the other, the moral law within the soul, raising him to an infinite dignity. Everything must be taken into account in our interpretation of Nature. Here, within the mind, we find certain instincts, intuitions, aspirations—men have used different terms to denote them—which have no meaning upon the material plane. They derive their significance from some unseen world, but they are none the less real. Wherever man exists, these inward movements of the soul appear. What then do we make of them? If there is no spiritual world transcending our life of sense and time, and yet within reach of that life, then per-

* This point has been very powerfully presented in Prof. D. S. Cairns's "The Reasonableness of the Christian Faith," Chap. II.

sonality is the supreme illusion, and falsehood exists at the very heart of things. Nature ends in irrationality and futility. "If the religious instincts of humanity," declared Romanes in his "Thoughts on Religion," "point out no reality as their object, they are out of analogy with other instinctive endowments. Elsewhere in the animal world there is no such thing as an instinct pointing aimlessly." If, however, there is such a world, then the human powers that seek it and discern it and relate us to it are the significant and illuminating powers of the universe.

We ask ourselves, therefore, "Are these inward laws real? Are these voices of the soul rightly heard by us? Do these roots of life bed themselves in the spiritual world?" It is immensely significant that the world's seers, those who have had power to look most deeply into the mysterious depths of human personality, have answered these questions in the affirmative. They have said: "This is how man is constituted. However they have come to pass, these things are so. The great story of Nature ends in man, and therefore must be interpreted through man. The Mind behind everything has expressed itself in the human

soul." That is the faith which delivers them and us from what would otherwise be a supreme mockery. The cry, the hunger, the restlessness, the longing of the soul, have been produced out of Nature but cannot be satisfied by Nature. The whole system has emerged in one greater than itself—greater in obedience, greater in moral choice, greater in self-sacrificing surrender to duty and to love—so that looking upon the whole process, we understand afresh the great words: "For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God."

That is the answer of the poet. He stands upon his watch-tower, and proclaims the final laws and certainties of Nature, made manifest in the human spirit. He had seen the wonderful panorama of unfolding worlds, the coming and going of almost endless forms and types of life; the terror and the beauty of the world now dizzied and now entranced his mind—and, he wonders what it all means. When Hallam died it seemed as if no one cared, as if this beautiful Nature had no heart, or else one that was false and cruel. Then he looked again and this time with a truer, deeper, steadier vision, until the soul of man became

luminous to him, and new depths of reality stood revealed. Hallam's love for him, and his love for Hallam, led Tennyson to revise all his hasty judgments. That friend of his had appeared in the midst of so much that was perplexing—his chivalry, his splendid purposes, his prayerful heart, his spiritual faith, his power to love and to evoke love, and all that he was to those who knew him best. And musing upon this manifestation of what must have been implicit in creation's purpose from the beginning, the fire kindled in his mind and he became a prophet to his age.

"He fought his doubts and gathered strength,
He would not make his judgment blind,
He faced the spectres of the mind
And laid them: thus he came at length

To find a stronger faith his own;
And Power was with him in the night,
Which makes the darkness and the light,
And dwells not in the light alone."

In the old Greek legend, those who looked upon the hideous face of Medusa were turned to stone, and the forests about her cave were full of men who had been petrified by her glance. When Perseus went out to slay the awful Gorgon, he

took with him a shield that acted as a mirror and in which he was able to behold her without harm to himself. There is an aspect of the world which has chilled and petrified the human heart. Its stony indifference, its devastating forces, its shattering storms and earthquakes, its disease and death, have caused brave men to lose faith and hope. If, however, we look at the universe through the shield of human personality, with its inflexible laws of right, its faith, its hope, its love, we may pass through the ordeal unharmed. For by a strange paradox we see the world without most clearly when we look at the world within. The vast story of creation is not explained until we read the final chapter.

It is important to gain this standpoint because, without it, the promises, the hopes, the assurances of " In Memoriam " may seem remote. The logic of the poem is not addressed merely to " the freezing reason's colder part." Its appeal is to the whole nature of the reader. It assumes certain elemental convictions and affirmations. If these are denied, the poet will not attempt to argue with us. He has, indeed, no argument to advance. You cannot prove ultimate things like love and

life and faith. He will only say, " These beliefs hold my life together, if they are not true, my personality is untrue, and may fall to pieces any moment, a fate only to be desired under such circumstances."

" I think we are not wholly brain,
Magnetic mockeries; not in vain,
Like Paul with beasts, I fought with death:

Not only cunning casts in clay:
Let Science prove we are, and then
What matters Science unto men,
At least to me? I would not stay."

The tide of trouble which came upon the waiting soul of Tennyson proved itself, at last, extraordinarily fertile. It awakened the deeper powers of his genius, and qualified him to speak such words as men in sorrow and doubt will not allow to perish.

From these one hundred and thirty-one poems which compose " In Memoriam " and which reflect the thought and life of the poet for seventeen years, we may see the gradual deepening of three great convictions. He affirms the soul's faith in a God of righteous love, in the survival of person-

ality beyond the bounds of man's physical life, and in that inward sense of Duty which has found its supreme outward authority in Jesus Christ our Lord.

FAITH IN A GOD OF LOVE

THE SHOCK of Hallam's death compelled the poet to examine afresh the arguments which had been advanced in favour of the existence of a personal God, "Who ever lives and loves," and these, to his dismay, he found inadequate. They had appeared irrefragable in the calm, but when the storm fell they left him insecure upon a land that quaked and shifted beneath his feet. It is possible that Tennyson failed to do justice to those Theistic proofs which have strengthened the faith of many. To the end of life, knowledge for him was "a beam in darkness," something to be cherished; but it was unable of itself to dispel the heavy gloom which had fallen upon his soul. It is probably true, as some one has pointed out, that our elaborate proofs are really after-thoughts; reasons given for a faith which strikes its roots far deeper into human personality

than the zone of the intellect. We argue because we unconsciously believe.

Tennyson had heard the desolating whispers of despair as he sat in the solitude of his bereavement, confronted by what appeared to be a heartless world, heedless of all that men hold precious:

"'The stars,' she whispers, 'blindly run;
A web is woven across the sky;
From out waste places comes a cry,
And murmurs from the dying sun:

And all the phantom Nature stands—
With all the music in her tone
A hollow echo of my own,—
A hollow form with empty hands.'"

Over these soul-destroying fears, metaphysical arguments had no power.

Then it was that faith rose up and assumed the guardianship of his bewildered life. It was for such an hour it was given. There are experiences where faith is not needed. But the topmost height of joy and the lowest depths of sorrow are perilous places without its guidance. The uttermost things belong of necessity to the power that relates us to the unseen. So Tennyson was led to make the soul's changeless appeal:—

"I falter where I firmly trod,
And falling with my weight of cares
Upon the great world's altar-stairs
That slope through darkness up to God,

I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope,
And gather dust and chaff, and call
To what I feel is Lord of all,
And faintly trust the larger hope."

There is no shout of victory yet, only a feeling after God "if haply he might find Him." But those outstretched hands met with a response. Hands came out of the darkness to clasp his hands and to give him confidence. Faith was justified by experience. Later he writes of his grief:—

"Then was I as a child that cries
But, crying, knows his father near."

The effects of the nightmare have not wholly passed away; the horror of a dead world, into which he had looked, abides among the memories of his awakening soul. But now he knows that he is at home and his Father at hand. The grief remains but the terror has gone. He is being drawn forward into victory.

"And out of darkness came the hands
That reach thro' Nature, moulding man."

This constitutes a very real human experience, and one that has persisted throughout the generations. The testimony comes to us from men of all shades of temperament, all grades of education, all forms of creed, all distinctions of nation and race. They tell us, in many ways, that the outstretched hands lay hold upon reality, that it is no imaginary world we seek, but one that pours its riches into open human hearts. Men are changed by prayer as they have been changed by no other power. The instincts of the soul do not point aimlessly. They are God-created and God-fulfilled.

At the end of this series of poems we see how completely the faith, which began in feeble groping in the dark, was vindicated in the splendid confidence of his life. He writes at last of:

"That friend of mine who lives in God,

That God, which ever lives and loves,
One God, one law, one element,
And one far-off divine event,
To which the whole creation moves."

The promise was fulfilled in the experience of this modern seeker after God. "If with all your hearts ye truly seek Me, ye shall surely find Me." And that we take to be the first great service of this poem. "It impressed on our minds," said Henry Sidgwick, "the ineffaceable and ineradicable conviction, that humanity will not and cannot acquiesce in a godless universe."

LOVE TRIUMPHANT OVER DEATH

ARISING OUT of that supreme certainty of the Love of God, there came the conviction of human immortality; that his friend was alive, with all his splendid powers, behind the veil.

Here again it is the heart that speaks. We who have witnessed the passing of our young manhood, with all its splendid promise unfulfilled, can understand how intolerable the thought of extinction became to the poet. When the years have been rounded off and made complete in their earthly course, and weakness is seen creeping upon man's bodily powers, the problem is not felt to be so acute. But that death should smite Hallam at the opening of his life compelled Tennyson to face

humanity's sad complaint and tarry for the glad message "that he may run that readeth it."

In his calm summing up of the case Sir Oliver Lodge writes: "I believe in immortality as the final expression of the natural doctrine of the conservation of values." He means that if personality is established as a fact, then Nature, having produced so precious a thing, will certainly guard it from extinction. She destroys nothing. It is this same faith which Tennyson proclaims through the white heat of a poet's genius. The heart's revulsion from annihilation, its deep-seated protest against the futility of destroying that for which the ages have waited, its instinctive hopes unquenchable by all the fears that have assailed it—these all become reasons for believing in the persistence of life beyond the grave. His faith turns a shudder of protest into an argument.

"*. . . . . And he, shall he,*

Man, her last work, who seem'd so fair,
Such splendid purpose in his eyes,
Who roll'd the psalm to wintry skies,
Who built him fanes of fruitless prayer,

Who trusted God was love indeed
And love Creation's final law—
Tho' Nature, red in tooth and claw
With ravine, shriek'd against his creed—

Who loved, who suffer'd countless ills,
Who battled for the True, the Just,
Be blown about the desert dust,
Or seal'd within the iron hills?

No more? A monster then, a dream,
A discord. Dragons of the prime,
That tear each other in their slime,
Were mellow music match'd with him."

Some one may say, "This argument, charged with passion, is a flight into the unknown. It is true that these hopes have laid hold of the human soul as far back as we can find any record, and that they persist to our day. But are we justified in arguing from the world within to some world without? This is not the kind of demonstration to which we have been accustomed in our schools."

The only reply we can make to such a challenge is to ask that the issues be frankly faced. We believe that man has arisen out of Nature and that he is raised above Nature by his moral and spiritual ideals. Is it reasonable, then, to imagine

that the Universe has at last produced its supreme creation, only to fling it away as some capricious child does a toy? If life, which has been so laboriously built up, so studiously prepared for, so long heralded, which is capable of such high tasks, which "rounded into a separate whole" can love and pray and trust, is destined to destruction—then is the whole rationality of Nature impeached.

Some observers say that chickens newly-born will rush to cover at the presence of a hawk over the barn-yard. That instinctive fear is Nature's protective warning. Well, the soul has certain instinctive movements of protest, and none more marked than this against the thought of death "as death." The poet insists not merely that they are real—all life teaches us that—but that they are a warning against views which would harm the soul-life, transform justice and love to magnetic brain-storms, and lead us to conceive of God as "some wild poet when he works without a conscience or an aim."

From all these fears Tennyson found deliverance by faith. This deathless craving of the heart is to be trusted, the love which remains constant here, through so many untoward happenings, is

the earnest of an Eternal inheritance; the instinct of the soul has been fashioned by a faithful Creator:—

"Thou wilt not leave us in the dust:
Thou madest man, he knows not why,
He thinks he was not made to die;
And Thou hast made him: Thou art just."

There he leaves everything. God will do right. "He is faithful; He cannot deny Himself."

It is remarkable that Tennyson did not confirm all this by his faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and in His Resurrection from the dead. Perhaps he thought that the appeal would be more effective if he dealt only with the inferences drawn from the laws of human nature, and left the objective facts of Christian faith to be proclaimed by others. He was himself, as we shall see later, very certain of the living Presence of Christ in the world and in his own life. But when we have read this assurance, with its piercing certainties and death-defying hopes, we shall do well to turn to the Master's words: "In my Father's house are many mansions; *if it were not so I would have told you;* I go to prepare a place for you." He makes Him-

self responsible for our hopes, and declares that if they were not to be trusted He would have told us. Not one false word could He speak, and He pledged Himself on the reliability of these things by which men have lived.

COMMUNION WITH THE DEAD

TENNYSON DOES not attempt to enter upon the nature of the world beyond the grave; nor does he speculate as to what our blessed dead engage themselves upon in that vast abode of new life. He thinks, however, that they are near to us, and that they influence us for good; not by any material medium, but by those spiritual suggestions which they are able to impress upon our minds, and in those lofty purposes which they help to fashion. Recalling one memorable experience he declared of his departed friend: "His living soul was flashed on mine." Nor does he hesitate to ask:—

"Be near me when my light is low,
When the blood creeps, and the nerves prick
And tingle; and the heart is sick,
And all the wheels of Being slow.

Be near me when the sensuous frame
Is rack'd with pangs that conquer trust;
And Time, a maniac scattering dust,
And Life, a Fury slinging flame.

Be near me when my faith is dry,
And men the flies of latter spring,
That lay their eggs, and sting and sing,
And weave their petty cells and die.

Be near me when I fade away,
To point the term of human strife,
And on the low dark verge of life
The twilight of eternal day."

That may be possible. We cannot tell. We remember the mysterious words of an inspired teacher: "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"

THE HIGHEST, HOLIEST MANHOOD

THE THIRD great assurance of the poem is that, in our Lord Jesus Christ we may find an infallible Guide in the realm of Ethics. Tennyson approached Christ from the human side. He found that just as Nature is made intelligible to us only when it is interpreted through human

personality, so is our own personal nature seen to perfection in the light of the Son of Man. The truths "deep-seated in our mystic frame" have found an outward embodiment in Him. What in us is dim and inconstant becomes luminous and changeless in His commanding personality. Conscience is the star of Bethlehem, leading us to where He stands in the light of God. "I am amazed," wrote the poet, "at the splendour of Christ's purity and holiness, and at His infinite beauty." There were for him no problems of casuistry, because He had seen and known Christ.

"And so the Word had breath and wrought
With human hands the creed of creeds,
In loveliness of perfect deeds
More strong than all poetic thought."

I want to take the opportunity of speaking to those who feel that ancient forms of thought do not help to make Jesus Christ real to them. The beaten road to Him for the modern mind is probably that which reveals His ideal manhood. It is a duty we owe to Him and to ourselves to seek to understand how He lived when He revealed God to the world, and so seeking we

shall find in Him that which outsoars all human thought. Approaching Jesus as a man Tennyson came to worship Him as God. His unerring spiritual certainties, His peerless faith, His sublime humanity, His universal sympathy, His undimmed optimism, His natural purity arising from inexhaustible fountains within His own heart, His consciousness of a life untouched by the taint of sin—all these united to inspire worship and surrender within the beholder's heart. Whatever uncertainties may dwell within our minds, these amazing qualities are seen to dwell in Him by those who will look with reverence at the character delineated in the Gospels. He is the climax of human history; the fulfilment of all that man aspires to be; the promise of what we shall be when faith has done its perfect work in us. If we can see no further, we can at least see the wisdom of surrendering our lives to Him, and making Tennyson's faith our own:—

"Strong Son of God, immortal Love,
Whom we, that have not seen thy face,
By faith, and faith alone, embrace,
Believing where we cannot prove;

. . . . . .

Thou seemest human and divine,
The highest, holiest manhood, thou:
Our wills are ours, we know not how;
Our wills are ours, to make them thine."

We may allow Tennyson to make his own appeal in these great words. They come from one who found in Christ the final answer to his doubts and fears. He speaks to us from the standpoint of one who has striven to interpret the laws of the human spirit, and who now urges us, if we would be true to the light which God has kindled within our own minds, to follow Him Who had every right to say: "I am the Light of the world; he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

And what did Jesus Christ make of that surrendered will? We have but to turn to the testimony of his own contemporaries to find an answer to the question. "Tennyson was one of the finest men in the world," said Carlyle. "I look upon him with reverence," wrote Gladstone. "He realised to me the heroic ideal," adds Lord Shelburne. The music of his verse was surpassed by that of his life. He was God's poem. Walking one day with a visitor in his garden, and talking

intimately of his relationship to Jesus Christ, Tennyson pointed to a flower and said, "What the sun is to that flower, Jesus Christ is to me." He may speak to us, then, of the high possibilities which are ours when we belong to Christ. There is no better thing to do with God's gift of freedom than to hand it back to Him Who gave it. "His service is perfect freedom."

"The just shall live by his faith." Faith kept the life of love safe; it delivered this man from the horror of darkness into which he had well-nigh fallen; it rescued him from cynicism and despair. He took hold on life again by its redeeming power, and bravely served his age. It was faith that kept the mighty hope burning within his heart to the end that some day he should be one with his friend again, and that they would:

"Arrive at last the blessed goal
And He that died in Holy Land
Would reach us out the shining hand
And take us as a single soul."

And faith brought him at last to that "desired haven."

THE LETTERS OF JAMES SMETHAM

The Use of Imagination in Religion

THE LETTERS OF JAMES SMETHAM

THE USE OF IMAGINATION IN RELIGION

"Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off."

Isaiah xxxiii. 17.

OUR SUBJECT is "The Use of Imagination in Religion." But what do we mean by imagination? When we speak of a man, "drawing upon his imagination," we do not usually intend anything in the nature of a tribute to his veracity. This great word has been misused, and harmed in popular esteem by its associations. When a man falls, everything he holds falls with him. His words are affected by his loss; they bear the marks of apostasy. That is the burden of a great chapter in Trench's "Study of Words," where he shows how language has been degraded by the soul's infirmity.

The Latin word "imaginatio" from which ours is derived, meant the power to bring before the mind some object not present to the senses. By the use of imagination, a remote object is brought

near and made influential. It visualises the unseen, and shows us not merely what is, but what might be. An American writer in an article which appeared some years ago in "The Hibbert Journal" told of a railroad which ran between hideous embankments through a certain town of growing importance. A citizen wrote the company suggesting that the embankments might be made an ornament to the city, instead of a perpetual eyesore, if only they would clothe its sides with shrubs and flowers. His letter was returned. He then had a photograph taken of the embankments as they were, and plans drawn by a landscape-gardener of what they might be made. Both of these, he sent to the company, together with an estimate of the cost. A few days later he received a letter from the General Manager declaring that the work would be commenced at once. They saw it at last—the thing as it was, yellow, gaunt, and hideous—and, what it might become, a city's pride and pleasure. That is what imagination should do for us. It has power to make the ideal vivid and real. It is an artist in the soul that ever thinks in images and pictures. Memory tells what has been; imagination what

might have been. Reason shows what is; imagination what may be. Its power does not end with past and present. The future comes beneath its influence. Imagination helps us to take the long view of life, and to act now with a sense of how the present deed will appear after it has been consummated. It accompanies the soul, also, into every human relation, teaching each to put himself into the position of another. It blends itself with almost every phase of religious experience, for it comes to its own when we are dealing with ideal things and things unseen. We need make no apology then for submitting this important subject for consideration. If we can make a right use of imagination, we shall have laid the foundations of a really successful life.

As is true of every power of the human soul, the use made of the imagination is determined by the character behind it. No faculty is more easily swayed by our ruling bias than this. Its extreme sensitiveness makes it swift to respond to the call of its lord. Imagination will bedeck the road to hell as readily as it might make glorious our journey to the Celestial City. If I espouse an evil cause, my imagination will place itself on

the same side. Evil wins most of its victories through the traducing of this power. A miser could not endure his own folly, did he not summon imagination to his aid. He is actually a poor solitary man deprived of home and friends and comfort. Imagination, controlled by avarice, makes him believe that he is favoured beyond all others. He feeds his soul on ashes; and dreams of luxury and delectable food. Just as reason, passion, and conscience may be perverted from their proper function, so imagination may be made "procuress to the lords of hell." Character is the final word of life. It determines what use we shall make of God-entrusted powers.

This power of visualising the unseen is an essential element in religion. Whatever be our definition of faith, this quality must be taken into account. Every believer must use imagination. He may not know it, but he constantly employs it. His eyes behold "the King in His beauty" and the "far-stretching land." Writing of faith, an inspired writer declares that it is the "substance of things hoped for." We are tempted to believe that the substantial things of life are those at hand, those we can see and touch. No one

questions the solidity and reality of money or land, of armies or navies. But justice, righteousness, freedom, brotherhood are ideals, and as such, are to many without substance—the airy fabrics of a spiritual visionary.

Now faith gives substance to these spiritual facts. They become real to us in a deeper and more compelling sense than material things. The sublimest chapters in history are those which tell how men "endured as seeing the invisible," and counted the unseen as more substantial and precious than all "the treasures of Egypt." Imagination bodies forth the ideal, and places it at the centre of interest until other things are crowded to the margin of consciousness. One of the great British statesmen said that he "called in the New World to redress the balance of the Old." So imagination, tutored by faith, calls in the powers and treasures of the unseen world to enable us to withstand the seductions and fascinations of this present world.

All readers of Bunyan's great allegory will remember the outlook given to the pilgrim from the Palace Beautiful. "When the morning was come, they had Christian to the top of the palace,

and bid him look south. And, behold, at a great distance, he saw a most pleasant, mountainous country; beautified with woods, vineyards, fruits of all sorts, flowers also, with springs and fountains, very delectable to behold. Then he asked the name of the country; they said it was Immanuel's Land." The classic passage on the Use of Imagination, however, is the eleventh chapter in the Epistle to the Hebrews, which all should read who would understand the insight and endurance, the heroism and inspiration, which come to human life through the consciousness of the unseen.

There are few modern books which reveal so clearly the working of imagination in religion and life as "The Letters of James Smetham." Students of Art may find in these pages a useful guide-book to the work of great painters, and to those principles which underlie their art. Lovers of English letters will delight themselves in this master of prose, whose writings have the simplicity and freshness of Nature. But our present purpose is to study the working of a powerful and cultivated imagination in religious experience. James Smetham was a freeman of two worlds which have

sometimes been deemed incompatible. Lovers of beauty, in many instances, have been indifferent to the stern laws of morality, while some earnest souls have been suspicious of the suggestions of form and colour. James Smetham passed from the studio to the class-meeting or prayer-meeting, without any sense of incongruity. He was continually aware of "the beauty of holiness." The powers which enabled him to do such work in painting as startled Ruskin by its extreme beauty, and led Watts to write that "in colour, sentiment, and nobility of thought it was only to be classed with the very flower of modern art," were applied to the changeless laws of the Christian life, and to the sublime objects of the Christian faith, until his whole being was covered by their precious fruit.

This book is essentially a spiritual autobiography. The outward life of James Smetham can be told in a few words. He was born in Yorkshire, in 1821, the son of a Wesleyan minister. In early years he devoted himself to Art and never changed his life work, though the age in which he toiled gave him small encouragement. His genius was recognised by such great minds as John Ruskin, Dante Gabriel Rossetti,

and George F. Watts; but judged by any ordinary standards, it would be impossible to claim for him the position of a successful artist. He had himself the conviction that he might have become a fashionable painter, had he consented to use his brush to please the popular taste. From this he resolutely turned away. It was not until "The Letters" were published in the year 1891, that men came to know how great and pure a spirit had been in their midst.

This unsuccessful artist turns out to have been a supremely successful man. We cannot measure success until we discover the goal of a man's effort. There is, as Browning reminds us, "a high failure" and "a low success." * Smetham did not aim merely at selling pictures, though of course he desired a market for those he painted. He sought something bigger than to make an artist of himself. His eyes had seen "the King in His beauty." There was for him this immeasurable ideal, and he pressed forward "to apprehend that for which" he had been "apprehended by Christ." In "The Letters of James Smetham" we see

* See Dr. Horton's suggestive book "Success and Failure," pp. 51-67.

"how far high failure transcends the bounds of low success."

What then did our Lord do for James Smetham in the realm of imagination? What use did He make of this powerful imagination in the world of religious experience and service? It was inevitable that this faculty should feel the influence of the new life which was his, when the King of Glory entered and took possession. So central an influence should stimulate all that is in us, and must do so, unless we shut away certain portions of the mind from its authority, just as the Indian princes claimed independent rights within their own palaces after British rule had been established in their land. The fellowship of Christ should be light for the mind, power for the will, purity for the heart, and kindling for the imagination.

Here, in one of the letters, is the word we seek. "I find imagination to be a great help to religion. The Bible encourages me in this more than any book in the world; and often when the accustomed forms of truth grow less attractive, or when the pressure of moral responsibility becomes intense, the bright wand of the ideal trans-

figures in endless directions truth on truth. And so a strong refreshment comes to the soul by that very agency which in past years I have often been led to regard as an enemy."

It has been announced that a substance has been produced from the venom of snakes, which becomes the safest antidote to their deadly bite. The grace of God is able to use the very powers which harmed us to establish life and health in man's spiritual nature. The saint is made out of the same material as once made a sinner—the same reason, the same emotional nature, the same imagination. He may be recognised after the change. The intensity of Saul remained in Paul and made him the passionate missionary he became. When we read John Bunyan's books, we are not surprised to learn that, before his conversion, his amazing aptitude for words made him a master in profanity. Imagination was once Smetham's greatly dreaded enemy; it afterwards became his trusted ally. It is all a matter of lordship. A discordant note on the instrument is caused by the player's lack of ability; let the musician have the same instrument and he will evoke harmony. Only Christ can command our com-

plex nature, blending all its notes to the utterance of music. When the devil has control he always bungles, but even his bungling may indicate the possibility of music. A selfish man is potentially an unselfish man. Sin is the devil's inexpert, bungling hand laid upon an instrument intended for God alone.

Thinking of this confession of James Smetham that Christ was able to transform imagination from an enemy into a friend, I was reminded of an interesting passage in the history of Judah. In its conflict with Israel the southern kingdom was so far crushed as to be compelled to submit to the indignity of having one of Israel's forts placed only about five miles from Jerusalem, where it stood a perpetual insult and menace to the royal city. When Asa, king of Judah, captured the fort he was not content to have it pulled down. He carried away the sticks and stones of the old fort and, with the very same materials, he built two new strongholds to guard his capital city. Here is the ancient record: "And they took away the stones of Ramah, and the timber thereof, wherewith Baasha had builded; and King Asa built with them Geba of Benjamin and

Mizpah" (I Kings xv. 22). Imagination has been a Ramah to thousands as it was to Smetham —a fortress from which evil advanced upon the citadel. Now Christ, when He comes into our life, does not destroy anything except sin. He turns the enemies' fortress into the powerful guardian of the human heart. The picture gallery of the soul remains, but the pictures on its walls are changed. The image which so easily became a sinful fascination has gone, and its place is occupied by that which secures us against apostasy. The same materials are there, but they are put to different uses; the strong fortress of sin becomes a double fortress of purity; for God can make more use of our powers than can any other. Our safety is in the heart occupied by Christ. "When I had been with Whistler," writes Mr. T. R. Way in his "Memories" of the artist, "Nature afterwards seemed full of his beautiful pictures." The mind of our Lord, impressed upon ours, will make His beautiful ideals clear and vivid to us. He will crowd evil out, by bringing goodness in.

IMAGINATION IN THE STUDY OF THE BIBLE

MR. WALTER RALEIGH, in his book on Shakespeare, complains of the injustice done to our great poet by his readers: "We are idolaters of Shakespeare, born and bred. Our sin is not indifference, but superstition, which is another kind of ignorance. . . . There is no book except the Bible which has been so misread, so misapplied, or made the subject of so many idle paradoxes and ingenuities. His poetry has been cut into minute, indigestible fragments and used like wedding-cake—not to eat but to dream upon." The critic is surely right in proclaiming the harm done by a superstitious reading of the Bible. It has suffered many things at the hands of its friends. A false sense of reverence has sealed its pages. Imagination is not the only power of the mind which has been forbidden access to its majestic truths. And yet, when we remember that its revelations have come to us through human life, that they are the records of human history, it is clear that there can be no true interpretation of its Divine messages unless we bring with us a mind made eager and alert by true reverence.

If we find dulness in the Bible it is because our minds are heavy and preoccupied; they have been lulled to sleep on truths which angels desire to look into. This is not a museum of sacred antiquities to which we are led, but the word of a living God, spoken for the guidance, comfort, and redemption of human life. Reverence is indispensable, scholarship may be very helpful, but, if we would make that ancient world real, if we would enter into the faith which endured, the need which throbbed into prayer, the love which pled and warned, if we would "consider Jesus" for our own strengthening and inspiration, if we would walk "among the seven golden candlesticks," and understand the significance of the Church of Christ—then must we summon to our help imagination's utmost power.

It is very interesting to observe the important part played by imagination in James Smetham's study of the Bible. Like his friend, John Ruskin, he found in these inspired pages, a fair and fruitful pasturage for his spiritual life. The Bible which he used for twenty years has been described by Mr. W. G. Beardmore in his excellent little book on James Smetham. It was in-

terleaved, and opposite the text, from Genesis to Revelation, Smetham placed thousands of pictorial representations of what he had seen and felt. He called these tiny pictures "monuments," because they were erected to remind him of the ideas which were suggested by his reading. He writes to one of his friends: "The plan I am at present following is this: the Philippians I have thus gone through, first squaring the substance of it, then reading through Alford, Wesley, Clarke, Howson, and Conybeare, and the Horæ Paulinæ. . . . Then I add the various readings, the important words in the original, all forms of generalisation, so as to get big 'scopes' and little 'scopes,' lateral 'scopes' and the other sort; so that at last the thing is transferred bodily out of the book into the mind; and 'all the building rises fair,' just like a translucent house of crystal, where you see all through it at a glance—a house of light with no corner dark; and the pillars and grounds of the Truth firm and soaring and opalescent all at once."

Mr. Beardmore's account of Smetham's Bible is a revelation of the unexpected perceptions of imagination, of its outflowing of light upon fa-

miliar words until they come charged with new significance. Take this, among many illustrations given. In St. John's gospel, at the eighteenth chapter, the story stands of the great betrayal. The expositions have been many, and much has been written concerning Judas Iscariot, "who also betrayed him." What is Smetham's comment? Opposite the text he has placed a tiny etching half an inch square of a child, lying in a cradle, with innocent eyes, and sweet baby face. Underneath is written "Judas Iscariot." We had not thought of that! The traitor stands in history as one beyond the pale of human faith and love. Yet is there present in our hearts something which teaches us that he was, after all, one of ourselves. Those baby hands once held the keys of hope for some heart; the lips which kissed the Holy One in the act of betrayal were once pressed by a mother's love.

It was a rich pasture-land to which James Smetham was led by his Lord. On these broad and fruitful fields, imagination found abundant nourishment. "Eureka! I have found Him of whom Moses and the prophets did write; I have found how He comes to man's soul; how He

dwells, rules, guides, consoles; how He suffices. I have found the Way, the Truth, and the Life."

IMAGINATION IN THE ESTIMATE OF LIFE'S VALUES

AS WE read these "Letters" we are made aware of an inward standard of values, the knowledge of which is necessary for any real understanding of the author. His idea of success is different from that to which we are accustomed. If Smetham's ambition was to be a successful artist, to have his name in the mouths of an admiring public, to establish a market for his pictures, it must be admitted that he failed. But he had other ambitions. He fell under the lure of the ideal. Unseen factors were taken into account; spiritual motives were weighed in the balance. He would have deemed it a dishonorable thing "to be born a man and to die"—an artist. Devoted as he was to his profession, he felt, as his wife declared, "that to give himself up to the pursuit of painting, simply and entirely, did not meet the needs of his nature." Again imagination came to his assistance and made real the things

unseen, in obedience to which he found his supreme loyalties.

Some of his letters reveal a real human success. "I think that I am a little sympathised with as a painter who has not got on somehow, whereas in my own secret heart I am looking on myself as one who *has* got on, and got to his goal; as one who, if he had chosen, could have had a competence, if not a fortune, by this time; but who has got something a thousand times better, more real, more inward, less in the power of others, less variable, more immutable, more eternal, and as one who can afford a sly wink to those who know him, which wink signifies that he is not so sure that he is not going to do something comfortable in an outward and artistic sense after all. But be this as it may, his feet are on a rock; his goings so far established, with a new song in his mouth and joy on his head—and 4s. 6d. this moment in his pocket, beside some postage stamps."

What are we to make of these returns? Four shillings and sixpence with a few postage stamps do not constitute a very substantial recognition of such industry, and such genius. The world has

sometimes been even less generous to its noblest souls. But try to visualise the other gains he has acquired through his work, and through his faith and prayer. The inventory will mean nothing to us unless we find substance in the realm of the ideal. "Something real—something far better than a fortune—more inward—less variable—more immutable: feet on a rock, songs in the heart." We are in the sphere of everlasting realities; we are confronted by the weightiest and most substantial gains in the universe. For "the kingdom of heaven," said the Master of all true values, "is like unto a man that is a merchant seeking goodly pearls: and having found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it." He had been seeking good things, but at last saw the best. When people mocked, he was still content; for he *knew*, in his own soul he knew.

This use of imagination in fixing the scale of human values is so important that we may take another illustration from these pages. Here is a passage which should be pondered by every man who is in danger of losing himself in his occupation. Smetham had read the biography of that

very successful artist, Sir David Wilkie, by Allen Cunningham, and writes down certain reflections: "He did nothing but paint. What he read was only by the way, and though his mind was piercing in its energy of investigation in his own line, yet he was no better than the average small tradesman out of it. Witness his lectures, and the small style of his observations generally. Witness his small love for the great. 'To sit at their tables, mon, it is grand.' Weak and watery to a degree outside his art; his life was commonplace except within it. He reaped as he sowed, and we reap the benefit of his sowing also, with untold delight." Here follows a word of caution. "Perhaps it was no part of Wilkie's biography to speak of his soul's history, nor was Cunningham the man who could have done it." The impression, however, remains clear enough: "I see no evidence in his writings that in his youth or manhood his soul was ever awakened within him. . . . His religion so far as it appears might be summed up in the concluding sentence of a sermon heard by my friend Mr. Chubb from the lips of Sydney Smith, whose preaching, by the way, Wilkie much admired: 'Finally, my brethren, if you wish to

die respected, be respectable.' Beyond this depth I see nothing deeper in Wilkie's soul. I seem to hear an echo, faint and watery as in a cold old mossy well, 'Well! what more would you have?' It is this 'What more?' that is the key, the cross, the crown of my whole history from 1843 to the present time, 1871."

We may leave it at that. If a man asks "What more?" when he gives no evidence that his soul has been awakened; if he is satisfied with the plaudits and prizes of his contemporaries, having no more august tribunal to which he submits his life's accounts than that which is furnished by the transient customs of society, we can only conclude that there is a whole scale of values which he has not even seen. Whether true of Wilkie or not, it is certainly true of many. Browning describes them in his parable of the men who came to the seashore, to whom one said: "Come and I will shew you where you may find pearls." And they answered stupidly, "Pearls! We are not wanting pearls: we are dredging for whelks."

IMAGINATION IN HUMAN SYMPATHY

MUCH SUFFERING is caused by dulness of imagination. To be just to others we must put ourselves in their place. "I sat where they sat," wrote Ezekiel, and this he did before he commenced his ministry among the people. The failure to do this causes many of our worst blunders. Who can read the story of Jane Welch Carlyle without feeling that when all has been said in extenuation of her husband, he failed at this point? "The least attention from him glorifies me," she wrote. But he was too much occupied. When she once suggested that, after all, it was natural for a wife to expect some word of encouragement, he replied, "What! do you expect to be praised for doing your duty?" He had imagination enough to enter the mind of Oliver Cromwell and interpret him as none had done before. But he would himself have confessed afterwards that this great power had been allowed to remain dormant in the home.

Imagination has no loftier task than this. It should be an important factor in the shaping of sympathy; it should exercise an important place

in social relationships. And we find in these "Letters of James Smetham" how Christianity tutored and disciplined imagination to this high end. It is easy to see from the following passage in what school his imagination was trained. "Jesus Christ is the perfect sympathiser. He takes your view of things and mentions no other. He takes the old woman's view of things by the wash-tub, and has a great interest in wash-powder: Sir Isaac Newton's veiw of things, and wings among the stars with him: the artist's view, and feeds among the lilies. But He never plays the philosopher or the artist to the old woman. He is above that littleness." An imagination trained by such a Master will find something sublime in every human life. The Maker of worlds Himself came "and sat where we sat."

It is interesting to find imagination active in two different worlds in the compass of a day. He writes at the close of 30 July, 1872: "I suppose I ought to reckon (and do reckon) to-day's intellectual enjoyment perfect. Painting, painting in water colours, point by point, an Arcadian vale, with a shepherd and a nymph, with all the sensations (probably) of Theocritus. . . .

Theocritus 'piping down the valleys wild,' catching every breath of Nature, its glooms, its exhilarations, its pensiveness, its haunted influences—comes as near perhaps to my typical and professional mental state as need be." And then the evening in the class-meeting. "There comes in old Father Barnes. He is eighty-six. Can hardly speak for coughing. Yet I much question whether, if his soul were shown instead of his body, we should not all look poor beside him."

We are tempted to quote many passages, which illustrate this capacity of entering into sympathetic comradeship with lives whose aptitudes and tastes are far removed from those of the studio. One must suffice. "I have a world of meditation about old rheumatic chaps that I have known long years ago, whom I have met in prayer-meetings, men 'despised and rejected of men' and not noticed in the thoroughfares of life, but dear to God. Two such old men have gone from our little Society here at Stoke Newington. One sold a bit of tea, and had a little pension, and staggered along in June days with a tendency to hernia, and prayed as if he had a fortune of ten thousand a year, and were the man best off in

the world and arrayed like Solomon. The other sold brushes in a little shop and used to lead the singing in the prayer-meetings in a way to craze a sensitive person, and he prayed like a good old muff; but he was one of those who *lasted* out, a 'Class Leader' for fifty years,—only think!"

It is evident that imagination led James Smetham to discover glories in life which surpassed even those that entranced his mind in Nature.

IMAGINATION IN THE CHURCH

IT IS very refreshing to catch glimpses of the light which glorified commonplace church services to this eager imaginative mind. Some people judge the Church to be doing nothing unless something extraordinary is taking place. They are like those who must travel to the Rocky Mountains or to the Italian Lakes to see the glory of the world, while there is about them, and at their feet, mystery beyond mystery. A feeble imagination may be stirred by the gorgeous profusion of a tropical forest, with its glory of flower and of tree, but there must be distinction in that

which stands spellbound before the unspeakable beauty of a daisy, or the marvellous symmetry of a blade of grass. When the Church does something spectacular even the secular newspapers will present the chronicle, to our profound satisfaction, but there is a quiet constant ministry of hope and peace, a daily elevation of life, which has small appreciation at times even from those who dwell within her walls.

Look at this picture, dated 22nd October, 1873: "Feel fresh and happy. Thought of the Leaders' Meeting last night. There was the Superintendent. There was a gardener, a baker, a cheesemonger, a postman and myself. We sat till near 10 P. M. Now what were the topics? When is the juvenile missionary meeting to be? When the society tea-meeting? How best to distribute the poor-money? etc. Here were six persons delightfully sitting in a quiet room to forward their ends. What is proposed by each of those ends? 'Peace on earth, good will to men.' The very heart and substance of the angels' song, and not a particle of anything else. No wonder that being so privileged as to get into such healthy air, I have so often come home cured to the core—

come home, as last night, so fresh, so calm, so delivered from all my fears and troubles."

We have often attended similar meetings; but have not found them so exhilarating. Perhaps the dulness was not in them, but in us. It certainly must be thrilling to hear angels' voices break in upon the discussion of such topics; and to find a dull vestry transfigured by "the light that never was on sea or land."

IMAGINATION AND THE LONG VIEW OF LIFE

WRITING TO Gladstone, then a young man, Samuel Wilberforce urged him "to look calmly before you . . . and act *now* with a view to *then*." The Bishop foresaw the great position which the statesman would one day occupy in the world, and advised that he should project himself in thought upon that future, and act in the present so that he would stand unashamed then. It was a sound ethical principle. Half the evil of the world would remain undone if men would take this long view of life, if they would allow imagination to portray how the deed would appear when they should look back upon it. If Judas Iscariot had

done this; if, when he sought opportunity to betray his Lord, he had but visualised the infamous deed, and permitted the mind to contemplate it as it afterwards was seen by him in its own nature, he would surely have turned himself from his evil purpose and repented, before the tainted money had soiled his hand; and, at last, he might have been known as one who was snatched by the Redeemer's grace, from the verge of the abyss. Repentance after the deed is completed is good; but far better is that repentance which turns away from the purpose that seeks fulfilment.

Here again imagination becomes the handmaid of religion. It projects the mind upon the future; it shows us how the meditated deed will appear, how the cherished ambition will stand in the light of fulfilment—a blot or a beauty in God's fair world. Under the sanction of the Master, it summons us now, to take account of that high tribunal, where at last every man shall give account of the deeds done in his body. "For he that lacketh these things is blind," declared the apostle, "seeing only what is near."

We have observed imagination's *deep* view and *high* view: the Letters abound with suggestions

of the *long* view. James Smetham drew his inspirations from "the land that is very far off." He took a calm steady view of life. Reputation was nothing; only the fact would stand, and this according to the measure of faithfulness it possessed. "They have opened two new astounding rooms at South Kensington, in one of which is a cast from the pillar of Trajan itself, only it is in two parts. Round the column runs a spiral bas-relief." Who was the sculptor? No man knows. But what of that? "These figures were done by him, and though we know not his name nor place, he is *here,* winding round the pillar of Trajan. What is any one worth except for what he says or does? . . . 'The work is the man.' That you should be *reckoned* the means of doing this or the other good—what could that do for you? But to *be* the means—what can that fail to do for you? It will be found to praise, and glory, and honour, at the glorious appearing, when the true solution of these mystic problems of name and fame will be given, and when some will wake to discover the meaning of shame and everlasting contempt, and some will shine as the stars for ever and ever. It is deeds that will do that. Then shall every

man have praise of his own work. Cheer up, then, O Soul. We count them happy that endure."

I have in my possession one of James Smetham's paintings bearing the inscription: "He appeared unto two of them as they walked into the country." The Master walks between the two disciples on their journey to Emmaus, and everything in their bearing and look portrays the spell which fell upon the mind as He talked with them. But the power of the picture is in the background. The three figures stand out against a transfigured world, losing itself in the golden glory of the evening sky. The artist has made trees and field, earth and heaven aglow with the mystic Presence of that Word of God, by Whom "all things were made." And now He is by their side. No wonder their hearts burned within them. It is so He came to James Smetham; it is so He comes to men of every age; manifesting Himself in different forms, but the same Lord. He saves us from ignoble and mechanical views of life and the world. Under His influence the heart sees farther, sees deeper, sees higher. Life has its setting in the Infinite and Eternal. It has

associations out of mortal sight which change our motives and recreate our values. "We behold the King in His beauty and the land that is very far off."

WORDSWORTH: "ODE TO DUTY"

Freedom and Restraint

WORDSWORTH: "ODE TO DUTY"

FREEDOM AND RESTRAINT

"And I will walk at liberty, for I have sought thy precepts."

PSALM CXIX. 45.

"Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

JOHN VIII. 32.

OUR AGE is stung by a passion for freedom. Wherever we turn, we find men battering at closed doors, and sapping away the foundations of ancient despotisms. Freedom is the watchword of our day; it is strong enough to stamp an indelible anathema upon any institution which clashes with its purposes. There was a time when men would have stated the Christian spirit in terms of benevolence. Now we see that it includes freedom as well as sympathy. Brotherhood is not real unless it has liberty as one of its elements. It is not sufficient for one class to govern another, however benevolent be its intentions. The conquest of the world for the benefit of the

world is better than the conquest of the world for self-aggrandisement; but even that is not the best. Each nation, each class, each individual should be free to live and serve, and each should be held in honour by all. Never was the demand more imperative, never were men so determined to shake off the shackles of bondage. Witnessing the break-down of ancient autocracies, in the West and in the East, hope burns afresh:—

"Out of the shadows of night
The world rolls into light;
It is daybreak everywhere."

It is not surprising that under this surging passion men have blundered; they have torn down shrines thinking them to be prisons; they have denounced laws, without which freedom itself would pass away. "O Liberty!" exclaimed Madame Roland, on her way to the scaffold. "What crimes have been perpetrated in thy name." It has been claimed as the accomplice of the assassin and robber; it has thrown its august sanction upon deeds of infamy and shame. Very sorely has liberty been wounded in the house of her friends. Some there are, it would appear, who are not

able to breathe this bracing air of freedom without becoming intoxicated. They turn frenzied hands against true human liberty, and break down its bulwarks while freedom's name is on their lips. Events happening in our day have revealed again how liberty can become the foster-mother of ruthless despotism.

There is a twilight-land, lying midway between the two worlds of right and wrong, where it is difficult to distinguish between things that differ, and where many of earth's noblest spirits have at times stumbled in perplexing paths. There is an anger which is good, and which is enjoined by the apostle in his command, "Be ye angry; and sin not," an anger which clears the air and makes it easier for men to breathe; and there is an anger which poisons and embitters, an anger born of our selfish passions. How difficult it is at times to distinguish one from the other. Who can perfectly define and distinguish zeal from fanaticism, thrift from avarice, or faith from superstition? In that land of debate and controversy, the noble virtue of freedom has been identified with license, than which no more destructive spirit has invaded our planet.

THE LAW OF FREEDOM

WE BRING these two words together. If "law" and "freedom" appear contradictory, it is because we have put asunder what God joined. All freedom implies restraint. There is no such thing as liberty without obedience.

The deadliest foe of freedom is not outward bondage but inward license. If a man "does as he likes," and keeps on doing as he likes irrespective of what that is, he will probably continue the practice when he has ceased to like it. We speak of the slaves of drink, and the slaves of custom, meaning that there is a moral condition common enough where self-control has gone and bondage has ensued.

The texts which we have placed as the guides of our thought emphasise law as an essential factor in freedom. Each declares that obedience is the road to liberty. "I shall walk at liberty," said the psalmist, "because I have sought thy precepts." Obedience leads to emancipation. He is free, not in spite of his loyalty to the commandments, but because of it. The psalmist's words received the Master's confirmation. Never did

truer lover of freedom speak to our hearts than the Lord Jesus Christ. Standing in the synagogue of Nazareth on a certain Sabbath day, he read from the book of the old Hebrew prophets, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." And He began to say unto them: "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." It is a new era of freedom He has come to inaugurate. But never were laws more inexorable than those we obey in Him. He binds the soul by loyalties which only His grace can enable us to fulfil. This is the freedom to which He leads His people. "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

This is true freedom. It is the power to realise ourselves, to live out the thoughts and purposes God has placed in our nature as freely as the rose-tree fulfils the Divine idea in producing the rose. Anything which hinders self-fulfilment is

bondage. Freedom is the opportunity to be oneself. And obedience is essential here. Every act of disobedience to the Will of God is a placing of the soul in fetters. Christ came to reveal to us the laws of life and to enable us to obey them.

We have read the thrilling story of man's upward march. He climbs from realm to realm, and finds in each the laws, by obedience to which, he may rise still higher. But he is still a climber and untrodden heights await him. The law of the jungle will not enable him now to enter upon higher planes of being. Selfishness may reign in lower realms but here he must yield himself to Christ's law of love and faith. If he refuses, he will fall back upon the world from which it is the Will of God he should emerge. To rise above himself he must surrender to that which is higher. It is along the way of obedience that human freedom is to be found.

The man who pursues a life of unrestricted freedom is following a will-o'-the-wisp, whose destiny is some treacherous morass. There is deep significance in the history of King Saul, the chosen of Jehovah, who afterward became so sad a spectacle. He also determined to be free, and rose in pride

against the restraints of the Divine will. Led by turbulent passions, forsaking altar and prophet, he followed the dictates of his own unhallowed ambitions, until at last we find the anointed of Jehovah—the tool of witchcraft! It is a chapter in history which has been frequently repeated. The man who rises up in revolt against the higher law finds himself in bondage to one that is lower. He will not obey the prophet and hence passes under the sway of some muttering enchantress. Superstition fattens upon pride. Bondage enlarges itself to make room for man's rebellion against God.

THE BURDEN OF THE ODE

THE SUPREME message of Wordsworth's "Ode to Duty" is to be found in this truth. He proclaims in noble lines the inexorable bond which joins Law and Freedom. He himself was one of freedom's enthusiasts. Living in days of social ferment and catastrophic changes, he hailed emancipation with all the passionate fervour of idealistic youth. The "French Revolution" was to him, at first, the dawn of a new glad day. He

was a friend of Captain Michael Beaupuy, one of the noblest spirits of the great upheaval; and he hoped for all things through the fall of a long-endured tyranny, and the uprising of a free people. It is strange to picture Wordsworth wearing the red cap in the streets of Paris, yet how he gloried in that cause! But the Revolution became "The Terror," and emerged into the military despotism of Napoleon Bonaparte. Then Wordsworth turned away in deep disappointment. Passing swiftly from the dungeon of bondage to the bright light of freedom, France was dazzled by excess of light, and walked without seeing the laws which lead to safety. That undisciplined freedom, with its horrors and its calamities, found its record in Balzac's gloomy pages.

From this spectacle of misrule the poet turned to find some worthier conception of freedom. Looking upon the world without, with its established order and harmony, he saw that law reigned supreme. Disobedience in the heavens would lead to immeasurable chaos.

"Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong;
And the most ancient heavens, through thee, are
fresh and strong."

He supplicates for himself the same control of the "Stern Lawgiver," and this because he would be free.

"To humbler functions, awful power!
I call thee: I myself commend
Unto thy guidance from this hour;
Oh, let my weakness have an end!
Give unto me, made lowly wise,
The spirit of self-sacrifice;
The confidence of reason give;
And in the light of truth thy bondman let me live."

One of the charms of this great poet, and one of the secrets of his power over our hearts, is his constant appeal to personal experience. He gives us his testimony in this ode, and he allows us to hear his confession. He offers a warning to those who are tempted to throw off restraint in their quest for freedom. He had done this, and had failed:

"I, loving freedom, and untried;
No sport of every random gust,
Yet being to myself a guide,
Too blindly have reposed my trust;

And oft, when in my heart was heard
Thy timely mandate, I deferred
The task, in smoother walks to stray;
But thee I now would serve more strictly, if I may."

It is no emotional disturbance under the influence of which he now consecrates himself to Duty. His resolve is the outcome of calm and earnest deliberation upon the meaning and nature of human freedom, and in the quietness of thought, he writes down his hope.

"Me this unchartered freedom tires;
I feel the weight of chance-desires;
My hopes no more must change their name,
I long for a repose that ever is the same."

Wordsworth leads us to the same conclusion as we found in the Psalmist's words and in the teaching of our Lord. The poet travelled along his own road to the same unalterable decision. His study of life created the same ultimate conviction: Freedom depends upon a man's loyalties: it is the creation of his consecration. He had attempted other roads, and had been compelled to retrace his steps. He had known the

bondage of "unchartered freedom;" he had been crushed by "the weight of chance desires." Now, he seeks freedom through obedience to Duty. He would walk at liberty because he sought God's commandments.

THE LAW APPLIED

IT IS possible that to some this doctrine of freedom may appear a contradiction. But, depend upon it, there is no other way to enter freedom's broad domain than by the strait gate of obedience to duty. The lesson is so important that it must be repeated. To those standing on the threshold of manhood or womanhood, feeling the tides of present movements surging through their minds, it is essential that there should be no error here, for illusions concerning freedom charge heavy penalties. Many ancient authorities have been impeached by man's emancipated spirit, but the altar of duty stands confirmed. I would merely remind you now of the universality of this law—human freedom is based upon obedience.

(a) Man is becoming a freer member of the world in which he lives. He can travel quicker,

can strike farther, can see greater distances, can hear voices from more distant places than his fathers ever conceived possible. He harnesses the wild forces of the Niagara Falls and compels them to do his bidding—to drive his cars, to light his homes. He calls to his aid invisible, indefinable, imponderable powers, which exist in the air, and by their aid flashes a message round the planet in a few seconds. He flies more rapidly than the bird; he travels beneath the water with greater celerity than the denizens of the deep. But how has he obtained this larger freedom? By obedience. If he repudiates the commandment he sinks back into bondage. If he disobeys laws which God has established, and dashes his head against them, the laws do not bleed and suffer; but *he* does. The Universe will be a yet freer place to man's expanding mind. Great victories await our eager hosts. We are standing surrounded by powers which will one day be swift to do man's will. But always, as now, the law of freedom will abide in unshakable majesty. "We shall walk at liberty because we obey the commandments." Nature does not recognise our "unchartered freedoms."

(*b*) The laws of thought are as unbending as

the laws of the material world. Free thought is always conditioned by obedience. If we disobey here, we allow fetters to be placed upon the mind. Ignorance is the dungeon of "unchartered freedom" in the realm of thought. The artist is as rigidly ruled as the mathematician. To hear some master improvise on the organ is a delight; he moves with such ease and freedom to the expression of what he has heard from afar. But we find no satisfaction in the untutored effort of a novice. The master has achieved freedom by the obedience of a lifetime. He can do as he pleases now, because he has made himself a free citizen of the world of music by his unswerving loyalty to its laws. With all his apparent abandon, as he sits at the instrument he is held secure by inward restraint. "He walks at liberty because he obeys the commandment."

(*c*) Nowhere is this truer than in the world of pleasure. Lawlessness imposes upon itself a perpetual banishment. Intemperance leads to satiety. Religion has been portrayed as a spectre at the feast; it is really an indispensable element in world happiness. There is an ancient scripture which has been misinterpreted: "Rejoice, O young

man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." The judgment of God should not be viewed as if it were placed there to warn the young from the gardens of pleasure; it stands to guard us from grasping the flowers in our feverish hands and causing them to perish ere their time. We must walk with restraint if we would enjoy the rare flowers and luscious fruits of happiness.

One of the great Greek stories enshrines this law. Stung by a serpent, Eurydice dies, and is carried to Hades. There she is followed by Orpheus, her husband, whose music charms the dead and those who have the powers of death. Orpheus is allowed to take back his bride, but one condition is imposed. He must restrain himself, must not look upon the face of his beloved until he sees it in the light of earth. But love was impatient and could not wait the fitting time, and snatching prematurely at its joy, sacrificed all. When Orpheus broke the law, Eurydice faded away, and when he strove to hold her, his arms closed

upon empty air. The law is evident to all great seers. It is obvious to all who look deeply and earnestly into the nature of things. Intemperance kills joy. Restraint is the guardian of purest pleasure.

Even Godwin, the father-in-law of Shelley, cynical libertine as he was, adds his testimony to this principle of freedom in the realm of pleasure. In one of his letters he writes: "It is a refinement in voluptuousness to submit to voluntary privation. I always thought St. Paul's rule that we should die daily an exquisite Epicurean maxim." Of course it is. If we would gain our lives here we must carry a cross. The Puritan took his pleasures sadly, but not so sadly as the Cavalier. The court of Cromwell was hilarious compared with that of Charles II. If we could put a Puritan inside a Cavalier we should fashion an ideal pleasure-seeker. In the world of pleasure, we need the buoyant nature, with iron control at the heart of it. No man finds happiness who lives for it. He wearies of his amusements more speedily than he ever wearied of his labours. The pleasures of yesterday pall upon him. He craves some new sensation. His life becomes a constant

effort to stimulate a jaded taste. He groans under "the weight of chance desires." Here again: "We walk at liberty because we obey the commandments."

THE WINSOMENESS OF DUTY

IT IS no grudging or reluctant service Wordsworth lays upon the altar of Duty. He has seen the beneficence of God's commandments, and he sings praises at the moment of sacrifice.

"Stern Lawgiver! yet thou dost wear
The Godhead's most benignant grace;
Nor know we anything so fair
As is the smile upon thy face:
Flowers laugh before thee on their beds;
And fragrance in thy footing treads."

This is an aspect of Duty we have sometimes overlooked. Its severity has been seen, its goodness veiled. We obey but we do not praise. And yet God is never more pitiful then when He issues His commandments, never more merciful than when He sends forth His "fiery law." This note of thanksgiving is never absent from the surrender of the redeemed. They "fell down and

worshipped God that sitteth on the throne, saying, Amen, Hallelujah" (Rev. xix. 4). The "Amen" is joined to the "Hallelujah"; submission blends with praise; obedience becomes a song of happiness. It is true God sitteth on a throne, which is the symbol of sovereignty and law; but that throne is a throne of grace. It is all love and all law. There is no commandment but contains a gospel, no fiat but rings with love.

It was a strange complaint of Emerson, that Jesus makes such tremendous claims. Tremendous indeed they are, passing beyond all that has been uttered by the world's sternest teachers, claiming jurisdiction over the thoughts and intents of the heart; demanding loyalty more immediate than that we give to father, mother, wife, or child. But this is the inexorableness of love. The doctor does not relax his rules when his child's health is at stake. He does not say, "This is an opportunity for paternal indulgence; she shall not be restrained as my other patients." The little invalid may wish this, but never is the doctor more inexorable. His heart is in the work and love is very stern. The Master's heart is in this work of leading us to life and freedom, and hence He

makes tremendous claims. We wish to pick and choose among His laws but He will not yield; we cry for the dangerous scorpion, but He will not hear. There came into His presence a young ruler to whom our Lord was especially drawn. He had kept the commandments, as they had been known to him; but he was not satisfied. There was something in Jesus which created a noble discontent. "And Jesus looking upon him *loved him,* and said, Go sell all that thou hast and give to the poor and come follow Me." He said that because He loved him; had there been no love in His heart He would not have heeded, nor counselled, nor cared. Loving the youth, He hated that which held him from eternal life. The commandment seemed stern to the seeker, but it had a very fair and tender aspect could he but have seen.

Love makes us stern. Love makes us inexorable. It is when we see what bondage is inflicted upon the souls of men by the tyranny of chance desires that we dare not equivocate or compromise. After witnessing one evening the evils wrought upon youth by alcoholic liquors, when the horror of it had been brought unadorned be-

fore his own eyes, Rudyard Kipling wrote his frank recantation: "It is not good that we should let drink be before the eyes of our children, and I have been a fool in writing to the contrary." Well, Jesus *sees*. He sees it all naked and open, the power and the subtlety, the misery and bondage of disobedience. His heart yearns with pity as He sees, and therefore it is no use pleading for indulgence. He will relax not one jot or tittle of His law. Were He to do so we should one day impeach His wisdom and His mercy. Supremely true are Wordsworth's lines when applied to Him:—

> *"Stern Lawgiver! yet thou dost wear*
> *The Godhead's most benignant grace;*
> *Nor know we anything so fair*
> *As is the smile upon thy face."*

THE HIGHER FREEDOM

THERE IS a further truth of deep importance expressed in this ode. The noblest freedom is found where the outward law becomes an inward passion; where men lose the duty in the joy.

"There are who ask not if thine eye
Be on them; who, in love and truth,
Where no misgiving is, rely
Upon the genial sense of youth;
Glad hearts without reproach or blot;
Who do thy work, and know it not.

. . . . . .

Serene will be our days and bright,
And happy will our nature be,
When love is an unerring light,
And joy its own security."

It is a vivid description of that spiritual condition which the Psalmist knew when he cried, "O how love I thy law," and which the Master alone perfectly apprehended Who said: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me." St. James writes of this as the "royal" law "of liberty," suggesting by his striking metaphor that those who enter it are heirs of the kingdom of God, enrolled therein, not as servants, but as sons.

Wordsworth would seem to imply that this is possible only to the few. He proclaims a kind of aristocracy in this world of duty, entered by certain choice spirits through right of qualities bestowed upon them in birth. Whether we are correct or not in our interpretation of his words,

it is certain that, on this point, we do well to turn to that great Christian apostle of liberty, St. Paul. Without hesitation he declares that this is possible to all who have accepted the spirit of sonship in Jesus Christ. He proclaims the highest liberty to all who yield themselves to Him Who came to breathe a new spirit into man's rebellious mind. Rejoicing himself in "the liberty of the glory of the children of God," he reveals its secret in one glad word: "I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision." The glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ, which had smitten Saul, the rebel, to the dust, on that memorable journey to Damascus, became, as he yielded himself to its authority, the power which established the freedom of sonship in his heart. He was not merely led into a kingdom: he was made a participator of its spirit.

We have seen a metal canister, emptied of air, crushed by the weight of the atmosphere without. It only needed the same pressure within, to bear the outward burden. Isolated from the world, it was crushed by the world; when made a member of the world, it carried the burden without strain. And this is the secret of Christian freedom. If we

were led into the kingdom of God, without an ordaining of the Spirit of God, life would be intolerable. The Spirit of the Lawgiver is imparted to the believer, until some "do God's work and know it not."

One thing which greatly surprised and delighted M. Taine during his stay in England was the manner in which flowers in public parks were secure from spoliation. Citizens did not need guardians; they did not dream of robbery. "The aim of every society," he added, "is, that each should be his own policeman, and should recognise no other." * It is so our Lord would deal with His disciples. He would give them the free run of God's domain because they have received the spirit of sonship. "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." Policemen are not appointed for the children of the house or for the friends of its owner.

Christianity always amazes us by its faith in

* Quoted by Rev. W. M. Macgregor, D.D., "Christian Freedom," p. 345.

redeemed human nature. Those who once were sunk in the deepest and most degrading bondage, are trusted to act like sons of God. To lead us into the world of duty is a great benefaction; but to bring us into harmony with that world is far greater. To make us servants is beyond our utmost claim; but to make us sons, is an act of the grace of God that passeth understanding. "*Behold,*" cried the apostle in astonishment, "what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." To which great word, according to the Revised Version, the writer adds: "And such we are." God called us sons, and treated us as sons, long before we had any confidence in ourselves. But His faith in us creates our faith in Him. He storms our unbelief, and before we can well explain how it has come about, we cry in astonished gratitude, "and such we are." That spirit of sonship is the spirit of noblest liberty. "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

THE FULFILMENT OF THE LAW OF FREEDOM

IN OUR Lord Jesus Christ, we may find our hopes of freedom fulfilled. He comes to make known to us, in His own perfect life, the laws of God without which liberty is impossible. But He does more. It is in His power to make "the yoke easy and the burden light" through the gift of His Spirit. Christianity is a summons to those who have been fettered by the tyranny of custom and the bondage of selfishness, to enter upon a free human life; it is a clear call of hope to all who have felt the weight "of chance desires," the despotism of "unchartered freedom." If we cling to Him against the seductions that beset us from without, and against the pleading voices of the enemies so much the more to be dreaded because they are within our own hearts, He will lead us into that world in which He Himself moved so freely and happily with God. It is to those who feel the irksomeness of bondage He makes His appeal. Some there are, who have become so habituated to slavery that they have ceased to trouble about it. Despotism has for the moment stifled the instinct of freedom. When the Master

spoke of liberty to the Jews, they hotly replied that they had never been in bondage. From such Jesus turned away, waiting until they should become conscious of their need. But to all those who look wistfully for something better and higher than they have known, who seek an escape from the fetters of a selfish nature, He comes to proclaim His gospel of hope.

An English preacher * has stated that when the British Fleet conquered Algiers and broke the power of those pirates who held the city in their cruel hands, the Admiral sent an offer of pardon to all who cared to leave the city and would claim the protection of the British flag. It was a moving spectacle to see them troop from their dens of squalor, with faces aglow at the thought of emancipation. But some refused to come. They were satisfied. They had been born in slavery and knew nothing better. They were habituated to bondage. And though the summons reached them, and liberty was brought to the very doors of the dungeon-house, they gave no heed. For such, of course, nothing could be done. But those

* The reference is to a sermon preached by the Rev. R. J. Campbell, M.A., in the City Temple, London, about six years ago, to whose suggestion I owe the illustration.

who came responding to the offer, found freedom in a new obedience. They were not sent out ungoverned, unprotected, unchartered; they were made free members of a free constitution. Christ's offer of freedom comes to all. Some there are who do not respond. They are satisfied; they prefer to wear the chains; they would be content without God, without purity, without peace. Their condition is suggested by that mysterious passage, in the New Testament, which speaks of "spirits in prison which sometime were disobedient." These also heard the call of the Emancipator, but gave no heed. They preferred the prison house to the Father's home. What can be done with such except pray that something may stab the spirit broad awake and make it conscious of bondage? But, to the discontented prisoners—"the prisoners of hope"—to all who chafe beneath their fetters and who look for the coming of deliverance, Christ offers the glorious gift of freedom. It is not by throwing open the barred doors and heavy gates merely, but by summoning us into a new world of spontaneous allegiance, that He makes us free. We walk at liberty because we keep His commandments.

Freedom is our birthright. This watchword of our age is the creation of the Christian spirit. We do well to claim for ourselves fulness of life, opportunity to be ourselves through the whole range of our being. Let us not, however, be lured to destruction by siren voices, for many have not returned who went out in quest of freedom. Be sure of this, that there can be for us no liberty while that which is likest God within the soul is subject to repression, while conscience is hushed, mercy starved, prayer stifled and the will to goodness broken. Earth has no sadder sight than of those, who, seeking freedom, find themselves in the dungeon of despair. "Prove the spirits," urged the apostle, "whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world." They have promised freedom through self-indulgence, through license, through deeds which should not so much as "be named," and many have been deceived. But Christ meets us, and He is faithful. He is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life." If we follow that Way—if we yield ourselves to that Truth, if we accept that Life we shall not fail. If we make Him Lord He will make us free for "His service is perfect freedom."

MORLEY: "LIFE OF GLADSTONE"

The Creative Power of Christian Faith

MORLEY: "LIFE OF GLADSTONE"

THE CREATIVE POWER OF CHRISTIAN FAITH

"We are ambitious that . . . we may be well pleasing unto Him."

2 Corinthians v. 9 (R.V., margin).

IN HIS "Life of Gladstone," Lord Morley relates an interesting conversation he once had with the statesman on the topic of ambition: "'I do not think,' said Gladstone, 'that I can tax myself in my own life with ever having been much moved by ambition.' The remark so astonished me that, as he afterwards playfully reported to a friend, I almost jumped up from my chair." Then Morley adds his own later reflections. "If ambition means love of power or fame for the sake of glitter, or decoration, external renown, or even dominion and authority on their own account, then his view of himself was just. I think he had none of it. Ambition in a better sense, for the motion of a resolute and potent genius to use strength for the purposes of strength, to clear the path, dash obstacles

aside, force good causes forward—such a quality as that is the very law of the being of a personality so vigorous, intrepid, confident, and capable as his."

The statement makes an excellent exposition of the text which we have taken as the starting point of our present study. Christianity does not fling away ambition. It destroys nothing that is so essentially human and useful as this great and noble passion. That ambition has led to so much tragedy is due to the misdirection of a legitimate human instinct. All powerful things are harmful unless they are controlled and harnessed to useful ends. The degradation of ambition is due to self seeking. Delivered from this it will be a progressive force, leading to the unfolding of our powers in the service of others. And this is what Christianity places before us as our ideal: that we should be ambitious to be well pleasing unto Christ. We are to relate all our efforts to the Great Master.

Morley would be the first to admit that such was the ambition, and such the creative force in the career of Gladstone. The "Life of Gladstone" has proved itself to be one of the supreme

religious biographies of the last century. The superb powers of that highly endowed personality were brought into obedience to Jesus Christ. "Not for two centuries," declares the biographer, "had our island produced a ruler in whom the religious motive was paramount in the like degree," and quoting Lord Salisbury's tribute to his illustrious political opponent, that he was "a great Christian," Morley adds: "Nothing could be more true or better worth saying."

We are justified, therefore, in claiming Gladstone as a creation of the Christian faith. The plant was grown from this seed. The greatness of the man was due to the fact that to extraordinary natural powers there was added, by faith in Jesus Christ, a new principle of character which came to control and distinguish all that was his. We cannot conceive Gladstone without Christianity. He would still, of course, be great, but he would not have been what all men now acknowledge him to have been.

We shall not attempt any appreciation of that political life, "ever greatly absorbed," as Gladstone himself declared, "in working the institutions of his country"; nor yet of that amazing

fund of knowledge and versatility of gift that afterwards almost became legendary. Our present purpose is to show how Christianity expressed itself in that eminent life, and how Christ was glorified in the service of one whose supreme ambition was to be well pleasing unto Him.

It is sometimes imagined that religion takes the place of other things and is jealous of their presence. A busy man feels that he is too busy to be religious. But religion is union with God in life. It is through surrendered lives that the world—its government, its commerce, its education, its recreation—is to be brought into subjection to Christ. Religion is in these things as electricity is in the wire, flashing into glory through their instrumentality. The faith of Christ will not crowd other things out except in so far as they are essentially evil; it will permeate, and elevate, and transfigure the whole.

Gladstone may help to illustrate this necessary truth. It was not the work he did, nor the books he wrote, nor the speeches he made, that led those who fought against him to vie with those who fought by his side in paying tribute to his memory when the warrior laid down his sword

and divested himself of his armour; but because all he wrote, and all he said, and all he did, whether mistaken in judgment or not, was inspired by lofty motives and high ideals. Whatever other causes may ensure his immortal memory there is none more impressive than this: he was in the public life of the world "a great Christian." "You do not know how those of us regard you," wrote Spurgeon, "who feel it a joy when a premier believes in righteousness. We believe in no man's infallibility, but it is restful to be sure of one man's integrity."

It is always interesting to trace back some mighty river to its source. Gladstone's religious life arose early. In 1818, when he was nine years old, his mother wrote to a friend, "I am quite sure that William has been truly converted to God." Certain it is that he carried with him to Eton an inward standard of selection which made itself manifest amid the diverse elements that compose the character of a Public School. "I remember him at Eton," wrote a contemporary, "a pure and noble boy." The Earl of Rosebery tells of a banquet at which an indecent toast was proposed and drunk by all the boys, except young Glad-

stone. He refused to drink. There was a storm of ridicule, but he buried his face in his hands, and remained loyal to his conscience. One who was present wrote to his parents the same night, asking that he might go to Oxford instead of Cambridge so that he might remain under the influence of young Gladstone. His influence in the University was of the same nature. Archbishop Temple, who followed him to Oxford after the lapse of ten years, declared that, "men drank less in the forties because Gladstone had been abstemious in the thirties."

Leaving the University, Gladstone's whole desire was to enter the Church. "The conviction flashes on my mind," he wrote to his father, "with a moral force I cannot resist, and would not if I could, that the vineyard still wants labourers; the kingdoms of this world have not become the kingdoms of our Lord, and till they are become such there can be no claim so solemn and imperative."

We cannot without hesitation join with those who lightly declare that it was altogether good that Gladstone should have been deterred by his father from taking this step. The Church in the

last century sorely needed leadership. When we consider its present position, representing as it does the spirit of redemption and reconciliation in human life, and yet pathetically ineffective in this divine and most necessary ministry, we conjecture wistfully what might have been accomplished by that eager and powerful personality entirely engaged in its interests. To the end of his life, Gladstone realised the tremendous urgency and indispensableness of the work of the Christian Church. He was an old man when he wrote to the Duke of Argyll his deep conviction that "we politicians are children playing with toys in comparison to that great work of and for mankind which has to be done and will yet be done, in restoring belief." It will not be by the fashioning of organisations that the world will make progress; these soulless institutions must perish unless they are inhabited by the breath of life. The Church of Christ still offers a supreme opportunity for unselfish service, and in considering his vocation each should give earnest thought to this solemn and imperative call.

Probably, however, they are right who point out that the withdrawal of such an inspired per-

sonality as this from public life would not merely have been an impoverishment of the national service and tradition, but would also have deprived Christianity of one of its most impressive advocates. The Christian always reflects the life of Christ: that reflection is Christianity. But each reflects only a part of the Divine full-orbed glory. The sunlight is always the same, but when it falls upon the flowers of the garden, it is seen sometimes green and sometimes purple, sometimes violet, and sometimes white. The garden is beautiful because of its manifold reflections. The greatness of our Blessed Lord may be judged by the fact that He has influenced so many and such different personalities. His resources are infinite. We remember Watts, Tennyson, Browning, Smetham, in art and literature; Lawrence, Gordon, Havelock, Roberts, in the army; Samuel Morley, Frank Crossley, in commerce; Shaftesbury, Howard, Elizabeth Fry, William Booth, in social reform and that vast army of humble labourers around whose unnoticed ways was shed an atmosphere of spiritual grace and dignity:

"They are but broken lights of Thee,
And Thou, O Lord, art more than they."

God's vocation is in no sense limited to a church. The ministers of God belong to all classes. Gladstone was a minister of God serving as a minister of the State. He fought human battles, espoused public causes, busied himself to utter absorption in national affairs, and yet tarried, to use one of his own words; "in the inner court of the sanctuary whereof the walls are not built with hands."

"The saint and poet dwelt apart: but thou
Wast holy in the furious press of men,
And choral in the central rush of life."

A CREATIVE FAITH

THE MOST solid, substantial, and influential factor in any life is its faith. Find out what a man really believes and you can forecast everything else. A materialistic philosophy is bound ultimately to express itself in a Schopenhauer or a Nietzsche. It is only a question of time. Faith shapes character as a sculptor does his marble. What I want to emphasise is, that the ultimate power in Gladstone's life was

his faith in Jesus Christ. But we must go somewhat into detail here.

(*a*) Gladstone believed profoundly in historic Christianity. There is a disjointed way of dismissing with a superior air the very idea of a special revelation. Some people appear to think that religion is anything that has a mystical suggestion in it. If a man worships, it does not matter what he worships. They lay hold of some such phrase as "every religion has its truth" or "God is immanent in all things," which, while no doubt true, does not mean that all religions are equally true, or that God is equally revealed by all things. Christianity is that revealing of God which has come to us in and through the person of Jesus Christ. It was upon this that Gladstone built his faith. He found security there. "All I write and all I think and all I hope," he said, "is built upon the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, the one central hope of our wayward race."

Our biographer writes of a speech delivered by Mr. Gladstone on the second reading of the "Affirmation Bill" in the British House of Commons, occasioned by Charles Bradlaugh's return to

Parliament, as one of the most impressive he ever made in that chamber. Under the system then existing, which admitted Jews to Parliament but excluded atheists, it was no bar to deny the essential doctrines of the Christian faith. This, as Gladstone declared, was a formal depreciation of Christianity, relegating it to a position of secondary importance. One of the members of the House in opposing Bradlaugh's return rose and said: "You know, Mr. Speaker, we all believe in a God of some sort or another." What sort apparently did not matter. It was against this casual creed, as a condition of fitness for a seat in Parliament, that Gladstone thundered forth his protest. "I am not willing that Christianity shall stand in any place lower than that which is indispensable. You draw your line at the point where the abstract denial of God is severed from the abstract admission of the Deity. My proposition is that the line thus drawn is worthless and that much on your side of the line is as objectionable as the atheism on the other." The House sat spellbound while he quoted the majestic lines in which Lucretius describes how Divinity exists: "in remote and inaccessible recesses, but with us

has no dealings, of us has no need, with us has no relation." All this meant nothing to Gladstone. He gloried in the Christian Evangel. The Incarnation of Jesus Christ, His redeeming power, His atoning Death, His Resurrection and His coming again in the Holy Ghost were the fixed and changeless points of his faith. He lived by them, and never swerved in making his confession of them.

(*b*) It was a constant faith. Everything in Gladstone was changed by the years except his religious convictions and devotions. His mental career is marked by incessant advance from point to point. He became more and more liberal as the years went by. In views about Church and State, religious tests, national schools, popular government and questions of economic policy, he completely altered his views. It is interesting to note the votes recorded in the House of Commons by the young member for Newark, during his first session, as they are named by Morley, and to contrast them with the measures afterwards identified with his name. Never was transformation more complete in Parliamentary annals. The whole career forms an interesting study in

the nature of consistency. An honest man to be really consistent must sometimes be outwardly inconsistent. Moral consistency belongs to the realm of spiritual motive and purpose. But with all these changes Gladstone never changed his faith. He saw the collapse of many structures which he had once helped to buttress, but the unseen Presence, in obedience to Whom he sought to perform all his work, remained in unimpaired authority over his whole being. His churchmanship was transformed; his inward worship remained the same. From youth to old age "he was ambitious to be well-pleasing unto Him."

(*c*) It was an intimate faith. His was, at the same time, a religion of authority and a religion of the spirit. He was not more sure that Jesus lived and died and rose again among men of old, than he was of His spiritual Presence in the hearts of all who truly seek His help. The House of Commons found him constantly in prayer. He declared that he could never have made his first speech in that Assembly, because of extreme nervousness, had he not been so wonderfully sustained by the presence of God. He rarely made an important speech without a few

moments of silent prayer before rising to his feet.

Morley has copied from the "Diary" a few illustrations of what the Bible meant to Gladstone in hours of strain. "On most occasions of very sharp pressure or trial, some word of Scripture has come home to me as if borne on angel's wings. Many could I recollect. The Psalms are a great storehouse. In the Oxford contest of 1847, which was very harrowing, the verse, 'O Lord God, Thou strength of my health, Thou hast covered my head in the day of battle.' On Monday, April 17, 1853 (his first budget speech) it was, 'O turn Thee then unto me, and have mercy upon me: give thy strength unto thy servant, and help the son of thine handmaid.'"

"At heart Gladstone is a solitary man," wrote Bulwer Lytton in drawing up his horoscope. When Morley found the strange document he added a note: "In this, the stars knew what they were talking about." But the stars gave no such message. It was "at heart" that he was not solitary. Outwardly, at times, he seemed to his companions to stand alone; but in the deep

centre of life there was a sanctuary and a Presence.

THE CREATION OF FAITH

THERE IS a permanent type of Christian character. It has revealed itself under many different conditions, but it bears the impress of the one controlling Spirit. We turn now to consider the kind of character which was fashioned by this creative faith in Jesus Christ. The work of Gladstone is well-known; and it is, of course, impossible to separate entirely personal character from the social consequences which arise from it. All morality is, in a very deep and true sense, social morality. The political career of Gladstone was influenced at every point by his character and had a reflex influence upon it. It is, however, possible for us to consider some of those inherent traits of character in themselves, and we do so in order to gain some conception of the type of personality Christ may produce in our day. The faith which controlled this life was born in Judea centuries ago. Is it possible to recognise it, in an environment so remote and changed as

that in which Gladstone lived? We believe that making allowance for the different circumstances of the world from age to age, there may be seen, clearly revealed, those timeless principles of life which our Lord perfectly manifested through the local conditions of His own age. What manner of person, then, was produced by this great ambition "to be well-pleasing unto Him?"

(*a*) We are at once impressed by the principle of self-restraint. Born in Liverpool, Gladstone was none the less a Scot: on his father's side, a highlander, on his mother's, a lowlander. He inherited the passionate Celtic temperament. But it was all controlled. Some one said that Gladstone reminded him of an Italian in the custody of a Scotchman. A better definition would be a highlander in the keeping of the grace of God. "Whoever writes my husband's life," said Mrs. Gladstone, "must remember that he had two sides; one, impetuous, impatient, irrestrainable; the other, all self-control. He achieved this by incessant wrestling in prayer." Invisible hands were ever upon him. He was a world-conqueror who had first conquered himself.

(*b*) He possessed what the New Testament

terms Simplicity. "I fear," wrote the apostle, "lest your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is toward Christ." Simplicity of spirit blends well with subtlety of intellect: it is never more impressive than when it appears in a life crowded with manifold interests. It means singleness of control—the refusal of the soul to be diverted from its supreme loyalty. Those who knew Gladstone never doubted this singleness of mind. "We were always at our best with him," said one who had long fought by his side. Three things he asked of God on his 70th birthday over and above all the bounty which surrounded him: "1. That I may escape into retirement. 2. That I may be able to divest myself of everything resembling wealth. 3. That when God calls me He may call me early."

(*c*) Very impressive, too, was his magnanimity. It has been claimed that during sixty years of political conflict he did no vindictive deed, he spoke no vindictive word. He found the House of Commons a splendid school of discipline. "It is a great moral school. It is a school of temper. It is a school of patience. It is a school of honour. It is a school of justice." One day John Wesley

dined with one of his preachers, at the home of a wealthy Methodist. "There's not much self-denial here," exclaimed the preacher as he looked at the table. "There's a magnificent opportunity for self-denial," replied Wesley. Gladstone found abundant opportunity for self-discipline in his work, being, as he was, the storm-centre of British political history for the greater part of his life-time.

A few references may indicate how the warrior bore himself in the conflict. "I was never so abused as in 1860, but it was one of the most useful years of my life." "Sorely tried," he notes again, "by something at a Cabinet-meeting. Angry with myself for not bearing it better. I ought to have been thankful all the time." "I can never be angry with Salisbury, his mother was kind to me, and I remember him as a boy, in red petticoats, rolling about on the couch." When some one remonstrated with him on his proposal to make Dr. Benson the Archbishop of Canterbury, on the ground that Benson was a strong Tory, and only a few days before had joined the Election Committee of a candidate who had made a violent personal attack upon the Prime

Minister, he immediately replied that the incident entirely confirmed his choice. "If Benson had been a worldly man he would never have done anything so imprudent." Such references could be multiplied, each giving some fresh glimpse of an elevation of mind that was free from the terms of cynicism, duplicity, and censoriousness. Never was his passion for the cause to which he had committed himself dishonoured by the spirit in which he sought to secure its advance.

We cannot too frequently remind ourselves of that great passage on "censoriousness" which Morley quotes. "Nothing grows upon me so much with lengthening life as the sense of the difficulties, or rather the impossibilities, with which we are beset, whenever we attempt to take to ourselves the functions of the Eternal Judge (except in reference to ourselves, where judgment is committed to us), and to form any accurate idea of relative merit and demerit, good and evil, in actions. The shades of the rainbow are not so nice, and the sands of the seashore not such a multitude, as are all the subtle, shifting, blending forms of thought and circumstance that go to determine the character of us and of our acts. But there is

One that seeth plainly and judgeth righteously."

(*d*) We remember his superb courage. This was one of the dominant notes of Christian character when it first appeared. "When they saw the boldness of Peter and John . . . they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus." This was not intended as a compliment: it was a statement from the enemy of the persistence of a certain type of character in the world. The same trait we find again in the nineteenth century disciple. He was fearless. "He might be right, he might be wrong," said the Earl of Rosebery, "but once he had made up his mind that he was right he went forward heedless of opposition." His denunciation of the treatment of political prisoners in Italy and of the rule of Ferdinand, was deemed a most imprudent act by most of his friends, and many were anxious as they saw the jubilation of his political opponents, who thought that he had, at last, delivered himself into their hands. "Let them be," said Lord Aberdeen, "they will find him terrible in the rebound." Fearless and relentless he could be where a cause had enlisted his conscience. His judgment may

be questioned on some matters of policy, but his moral daring has become a tradition of British political history.

(*e*) There was, again, a radiant optimism. Our Lord had hoped for everybody, and He had hope for the world. He never doubted the victory of good over evil. This quality has always manifested itself in His followers. It is essential to Christianity because it is based on faith in God. All pessimism must vanish as an evil dream when we are really sure of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Gladstone used to speak of an object in every human sense hopeless, but not therefore the less to be aimed at "because the horizon of human hope is not that of Divine power and wisdom." His political record recalls high enterprises launched upon an astonished world when he was himself an old man. But there is to me no more striking illustration of the optimism created by faith, than may be found in the work he selected to do for his Lord, not by proxy, but by his own consecrated personality. Those who have worked in great cities know how difficult it is to reclaim and restore those poor girls, who have

been degraded by lust and selfishness. This was the task Gladstone chose, and to which he remained constant in the teeth of foul misrepresentation. Deterred from entering the Church as one of its separated clergy, he solemnly vowed, in the presence of one friend, that whatever else he accomplished in the world, whether he was successful or whether he failed in other affairs, he would, by God's help, not rest until he had brought back some of these fugitives of our streets from the dreadful world into which they had been led. Frequently was he seen at dead of night, after the House of Commons had arisen, engaged in this chivalrous and holy mission.

(*f*) Seeking some word to sum up this character in its general impression, I have been reminded of that so frequently used in the New Testament to express what all Christian men and women should find in their Lord. It is the word Grace. The apostles exhort and pray that "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." It is, as Professor Peabody has pointed out, not so much a separate virtue as the creation of all the virtues. It is like beauty, indefinable, but not the less easily discerned. Our Lord Himself was

"Full of grace," and those who live with Him should possess something of its mystic power. And we may claim that Gladstone had this supreme Christian quality. To account for his extraordinary influence over others, we must surely remember this. Men were led not merely by his superb powers, but by the natural attractiveness which belongs to goodness. Mr. Winston Churchill, in the Life of his father, tells how Lord Randolph went home one evening after meeting Gladstone at dinner, "longing that it had been his lot to fight by his side." He had grace beyond greatness. The scorching fires of political controversy did not destroy his charm of character.

"We know him now: all narrow jealousies
Are silent, and we see him as he moved,
How modest, kindly, all-accomplished, wise,
With what sublime repression of himself,
Not making his high place the lawless perch
Of wing'd ambition, nor a vantage ground
For pleasure; but thro' all this tract of years
Wearing the white flower of a blameless life
Before a thousand peering littlenesses."

THE SOCIAL ISSUES OF FAITH

PASSING THROUGH personal character, this creative faith of Gladstone became an important element in the great social and national enterprises of his day. It is not for us, at this time, to attempt to pass judgment upon the public causes which were identified with his name. We may merely note that the years have certainly not detracted from the reputation of the statesman, who, both in foreign and home policy, was led to adopt or to propose measures, which were the subject of fierce controversy at the time. Two points, however, we may refer to, because they so clearly reveal the issues of faith in the realm of political action.

He was an idealist. "No one doubts," wrote T. H. Green in his "Prolegomena to Ethics," "that a man who improves the current morality of his time must be something of an Idealist." Christianity is essentially the acceptance of an ideal as the supreme reality. It has changed the world because it has seen beyond the world. Its power has been reinforced by its dreams. It is revolutionary and conservative at the same time.

The ideals at which it aims are old, very old, but when it destroys, it destroys ruthlessly the thing that inadequately expresses its being, as the butterfly leaves shattered the cocoon which enfolded its earlier existence.

In an interesting article published in "The Popular Mechanics Magazine" for June, 1919, Major R. W. Schroeder, tells of his strange experiences during an ascent of 28,900 feet in an airplane. Above a certain altitude everything seemed misplaced because his mind was dulled by the rare, thin air, and it was only by the use of oxygen that he was able to bring himself back to reality. The earth which should have been underneath, apparently was not there at all, but away over to the other side of the machine. The enfeebled brain at first insisted that his impressions were right, and that the earth was in the wrong place. The use of oxygen made things real again. He then made the rule, that when the earth appeared in the wrong place, he must take oxygen. The sun overhead became dim, and he could not hear his motor run: an inhalation of oxygen made the sun bright again, and the motor to exhaust itself like music in his grateful

ears. There are times when, owing to our enfeebled spiritual powers, the moral laws seem like the dim and insubstantial fabrics of a dream. We look for the ideals by which we had lived and they are not there. The only remedy is in this inward life of faith. That is our hold on eternal reality. "By faith we *understand*," declared the inspired writer. Our wisdom is to adopt the method of the bold aviator, and reinforce our failing power by the only sure remedy. We remember that our Lord spoke a certain parable, "to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint."

"Whilst the mere commonplace empiric
Sees separately the scattered scenes
And to the east goes groping on
Love, in one glance, may focus all things."

When a young man, Gladstone boldly asserted, in his first book, that the State must have a conscience. The inference he drew from that, at the time, was that there should be an Established Church. The inference may be challenged, but the assumption is impregnable. We have seen, in awful characters, writ by God's fiery finger, the fate which befalls a nation whose leaders de-

clared that the State was beyond the moral law. "We have got," wrote Bismarck to his wife after the Peace of 1871, "we have got, I fear, more than is good for us." No commentary on the present situation is more complete than that. Anything, obtained by wrong means, is "more than is good for us," and there is, in this matter, no distinction between nations and individuals. If we do not believe in righteousness, we are living in an unreal world, and shall have to pay the penalty of our folly.

It was by faith Gladstone declared in 1871, "the greatest triumph of our time will be the enthronement of the idea of public right as the governing idea of European politics." The ancient diplomatists smiled at this hopeless idealism, and went on their way to take things, "as they are and as they must be;" but it is the idealist who has been vindicated, while the man who ridiculed will one day be remembered only to point a moral.

We must note, again, the passionate humanity of his statesmanship. The central secret of Jesus, said Seeley, was his enthusiasm of humanity. It was not the *central* secret. That was faith in

God. But faith expressed itself in world-redeeming philanthropy. This also was evident in the career of our subject. His faith gave him a vital interest in the condition of the people. He identified the power of Great Britain, so far as he was able to do, with the cause of the weak. "Remember," he warned his fellow countrymen in an eloquent passage—"Remember that the sanctity of life, in the hill-villages of Afghanistan, among the winter snows, is as inviolable in the eye of Almighty God as can be your own. Remember that He Who has united you as human beings in the same flesh and blood has bound you by the laws of mutual love; that that mutual love is not limited by the boundaries of Christian civilisation, that it passes over the whole surface of the earth, and embraces the meanest along with the greatest in its unmeasured scope." That is faith's outlook on human life.

Inspired by faith, Gladstone pled before Europe the cause of struggling Italy, and became one of the founders of that free nation, whose sons have fought with ours in the great War; by the insight and conviction of faith he concluded the Treaty of Washington, in the teeth of cruel and

malignant criticism, and thus not merely established a precedent for arbitration, but also heralded the truer understanding between Empire and Republic, which, by God's blessing, is so rapidly being fulfilled, and upon which so many racial benefits depend; and by faith he maintained his splendid conflict with the "unspeakable Turk," whose crimes cried out to all nations for punishmet, toiling to the last day of his life for the deliverance of helpless peoples from a cruel despotism. He made weakness feel more secure by his power. His ideals are a priceless inheritance of the land he so greatly served.

So Gladstone lived, and so he became a citizen of the world. No public man of the century was more lamented on his death. The kings and statesmen of the world joined at his obsequies. The world, as some one stated, mourned "the loss of its greatest citizen." But not in these tributes do we find his claim to our reverence. He will be remembered because, to illustrious service and eminent place, he brought lofty moral ideals, and so lived that his greatest political opponent, seeking to utter words of admiration, preferred the claim that he was a great Christian. That is what we

have sought to remember in our Study. Gladstone is unthinkable without Jesus Christ. In Christ his powerful intellect found anchorage: in Christ his impetuous temper found restraint: in Christ his versatile personality found self-fulfilment. It was to faith he owed the conviction uttered in burning words to the youth of his land: "Be inspired with the belief that life is a great and noble calling: not a mean and grovelling thing that we are to shuffle through as we can; but an elevated and lofty destiny."

ROBERT BROWNING: SAUL

The Heart's Cry for Jesus Christ

ROBERT BROWNING: SAUL

THE HEART'S CRY FOR JESUS CHRIST

"If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him."

LUKE XI. 13.

THAT IS how our Lord would have men reason in the hour when faith in the Love of God needs reinforcement. It is an argument founded upon the existence of human love, and one, therefore, that is brought within the reach of all who read their own hearts. From the presence of love within ourselves, He would lead us to infer Love in the Creator. St. John is but applying this method when he makes his great declaration "Every one that loveth is begotten of God and knoweth God." He had studied in the Master's school, and reveals the impression made upon his mind by these far-reaching inferences of thought. To know God, he affirms, we should observe how love operates in ourselves, and then remember that though our love is small

compared with the Divine Love it is the same in nature. One result of this principle, which can only be suggested here, is that unselfish souls always find it so much easier than others to believe that "God is Love." They have an inward witness, an argument of the heart "which melts the freezing reason's colder part."

It is important to observe that our Lord begins His argument with the average man in His mind. In another place He said: "He that hath seen *Me* hath seen the Father." He might have emphasised the same certainty in this place and have urged His hearers to believe in the Father's love because of what they had seen and trusted in Himself. But He appeals now to something in themselves and so makes the inference universal. "If *ye, being evil,* know how to give good gifts unto your children, *how much more* shall your heavenly Father give." There is the flower, growing, it is true, out of much that is rank and foul, still in itself incontestably beautiful and fragrant. Whence then came the seed? There is the river, at times clogged in its course by thick fungous growths of selfishness, still, refreshing and redeeming life wherever it flows. What then of

the fountain? We are to argue from the highest in ourselves to Him from Whom we came, in Whose image we are made.

Our Lord would say to any one who doubts the love of God: "But you are capable of unselfishness where your child is concerned? Think you God has fashioned a creature greater than Himself? Do you pity helplessness in its need? Surely then there will be found pity in Him Who taught you to be pitiful. You are conscious of evil and do not profess to be perfect, you are just a normal man or woman with many faults, but you know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more then will your heavenly Father, infinitely perfect and good, give good gifts." This is a logic any one can understand, a system of reasoning which needs no further elucidation than that of the human heart.

When Kirchoff was endeavouring to discover the elements present in the Sun, he thrust, between the image of the Sun and the tinted band of his spectroscope, a flame of sodium vapour, and when he saw the subduing effect of his experiment upon the band, he left the laboratory hastily with the words: "That seems to me a funda-

mental fact." He had discovered, by his examination, the existence of the vapour of sodium in the Sun and had done so through the existence of the same element in his laboratory.

We should become investigators of the elements present in our own hearts, experimenters, if we will, in the action and reaction of powers within ourselves. Here, at all events, is one fundamental fact. Love is real—as real as man—as old and as new. The earliest chapters of human history are brightened by its presence. We find it in men of all races and conditions. There is no lowliest spot unvisited by some gleam of its radiance. It is at times suppressed, but never wholly destroyed. When men find it, they know it for the most Divine thing in the world. We find its mighty surging within our own hearts, and it has power to content us as nothing else can do. Love is the greatest fact in the world.

Under the inspiration of this noble passion men are led to do that which would surprise them did they pause to think. "What came to me? What made me do it? That's what I want to know! That's the great secret," cried Blanco Posnet in Bernard Shaw's Play, when he had sacrificed

himself, evil man that he was, to help a woman and a little child. Well, that is the question Jesus would have us ask, when we have been moved to do some unselfish deed, when we have been carried clean out of ourselves by the rush and urge of our own hearts. Here is a fundamental fact. What does it mean? "What made me do it? That is the secret." Face the fact resolutely and bravely and you have the great secret. God is Love and He has left no soul without some witness of that supreme certainty. "If we being evil know how to give good gifts to our children, *how much more.*"

"Oh, that I knew where I might find Him" is a cry heard through all the generations. We have swept the heavens with our telescopes—have searched amid rocks and hills and trees and sometimes have returned without the secret. But here, said the Master, is the true place of meeting, and it is near, even in your own hearts. Does not this throw new light upon His own experience and help us to expound His sublime words? "Therefore doth the Father love me, because I lay down my life." Never was He surer of the love of God than when He was about to make

the great sacrifice "for us men and for our salvation." Earth had, at that hour, it would seem, no witness of the Father's presence, for hatred and treachery abounded on every side. But within His heart the testimony was unshaken and "therefore," he concluded triumphantly, "doth the Father love me *because*" His own heart was breaking of love.

Our love is small compared with His and hence our faith is weak. But yet there comes an experience when we would even dare to die for some other or for some cause. If, then, my love makes me patient, long-suffering, hopeful, unselfish, I have a new starting-point for faith. I find a place from whence my soul can take the great leap into the Father's arms. The dew-drop is wonderful, how much more wonderful the boundless, shoreless sea.

"We must sit down before the fact as little children," wrote Huxley to Charles Kingsley. That is the scientific method. It rises from the particular to the universal. The *fact* is the beginning of all its theories and doctrines. It is this same method we are counselled to adopt here. Love is the greatest thing in the world—it is the

crown and completion of all the upward movements of the ages. Whether it be love of patriot for country, love of parent for child, love of husband for wife, it is the most precious development of life on our planet. This is the fair flower for the production of which the tree has spent itself. How came this to be? Some one answers "Evolution!" Of course! But love evolved merely means that love was implicit at the beginning. The longest story of unfolding will not bring something out of nothing, mind out of chaos—love out of rocks and mist.

Men interpret a process through the final product. And Love is the end. It commands the future, for civilisation sees how impossible it is to base society upon selfishness however ingenious may be its adjustments. It explains the past. The ages have waited for this manifestation. The longer we sit down before this fact, the more certainly shall we rise into the triumphant faith that "God is Love."

We turn, for a modern exposition of this high argument, to one of the most influential teachers of the nineteenth century. In Robert Browning's great dramatic lyric entitled "Saul" we find a

supremely powerful rendering of our Lord's teaching in this passage.

Browning lived in the days of the Great Conflict, when faith was beset by powerful opponents and the hearts of many brave men failed them. Some poets bear no special relation to the age in which they lived; they dwelt apart from life's press and no word of theirs suggests that they belong to one generation and not another. The writers of the nineteenth century were all, to some degree, influenced by the time-spirit, and voiced its moods of hope or of despair, of faith or unbelief. This is supremely true of Robert Browning. Some of us will be his debtors for ever because he spoke to us, in our own tongue, the sure word of God. It was something to have our questionings defined, for to give definition to a doubt is, frequently, to begin the work of deliverance. He understood the shapeless fear which shadowed the mind of his age. "This," he said, "is what we have to do battle with" and the bodying forth of that which had been spectral enabled men to arm themselves for the conflict. We owe him much also for the manner in which he idealised our deepest feelings, causing

us to see, beneath the grey ash, the living spark which, at any moment, may flash out into God's cleansing fires. Most of all, however, did he become prophetic in his splendid assurance of the Love of God. The supreme motive of his art and the perennial inspiration of his life and work, are summed up in the words taken from "Paracelsus":

"God, thou art love! I build my faith on that."

In Browning's Preface to "Pauline," written in 1888, we find reference made to the central thought of a poem as "the imperial chord, which steadily underlies the accidental mist of music springing thence." The underlying chord of "Saul" makes itself heard, clear and distinct, through all the poem's varied and sustained harmony. We are called to contemplate the sublime working of love in the human heart, its yearning to help, its self-devotion, its redemptive power, and then we are asked to consider the implications of this tremendous fact. The heart inspires the head; love appeals to logic. Man, however it has come to pass, is capable of love

and self-sacrifice. And this is human nature at its highest and best. From this supreme fact of Creation we must infer love in the Creator. It is God Who originates, sustains, and comes to manifestation through the love of the human heart.

The poem is based on the Biblical narrative in I Samuel xvi, 14-23, where we read of the deepening gloom which fell upon the mind of King Saul as a result of his self-appointed isolation from God. He was overtaken at times by fits of profound melancholy when no interest of kingdom or home made any appeal to him. His servants sent for David, the young shepherd-singer of Israel, hoping that by the power of his song, the evil spirit that troubled their lord might be exorcised. The result is made clear in the narrative: "And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp and played with his hand; so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him."

That is the story on which the poem is based. It is of David the shepherd boy the poet tells—of his interview with the king, of the songs by

which he tried to drive away the gloom of that demented man, of the Divine Musician Who played upon the chords of David's own heart and uttered thereby great gospels of hope until not Saul only but the whole world about him fell under the spell of His inspiration. By his wonderful gift of elevating the powers of the human heart and idealising them, Browning compels us to see that our love is actually a pledge of the Love of God. The heart becomes our teacher in the deep things of God. Truths not perceived by the intellect become luminous to love.

Celsus declared that the doctrine of the Incarnation degrades God. Looked at from the purely intellectual standpoint something might be said in favour of his view. But love is needed to interpret that stupendous act of love. Browning affirms, in this poem, that reasoning from what human love does and is, men might have anticipated the Incarnation of the Son of God. All moves forward to the heart-prophecy: "See the Christ stand."

The poem is spoken by David the morning after his interview with the King. He has left Saul, and, alone with the sheep at the dawn of

day, he recalls every incident of his strange experience with "fear lest the terrible glory vanish like sleep."

The opening stanza relates how Abner greets David at his coming and tells him of Saul's seizure. For three days the king has been shut away in the darkness of the inner tent and from him:—

"Not a sound hath escaped to thy servants, of prayer or of praise,
To betoken that Saul and the Spirit have ended their strife."

But now that David has come—"God's child, with His dew on thy gracious gold hair,"—there is hope in the heart of the warrior. David kneels and prays for guidance, and then boldly enters the tent where the king is fighting his dread battle. "Here is David, thy servant," he cries; but there is no answer. As his eyes become accustomed to the darkness he sees the king, a giant figure leaning against the upright prop in the centre of the tent, with arms outstretched upon the cross-support, like some king-serpent caught in his pangs:

"Far away from his kind, in the pine, till deliverance come
With the spring-time,—so agonized Saul, drear and stark, blind and dumb."

And David took his harp and began to play.

First he played the tunes which the animals love, the song of the shepherd which summons the sheep home in the evening, then the tunes which make the crickets leap, and call the quails from their hiding-place, and charm "the quick jerboa." But Saul is unmoved by the music that pleases the creatures of the pasture-lands.

Then the singer turned to the songs which men sing at the great epochs of human life. He raised the reaper-song, and the dirge of the mourners: "When the dead man is praised on his journey;" then, with swift change, the wedding-march peals through the tent; and afterwards the song of the builders. Still the desolate life was unvisited by hope. So David tries the strains of the Temple and tunes his harp to the chant of the Levites as they "go up to the altar in glory enthroned." And then he dropped his harp swiftly: "for here, in the darkness, Saul groaned." The song of the sanctuary stabs his misery into deeper anguish,

for it recalls the day when he was God's chosen, before success had engendered pride in his rebellious heart.

" And the tent shook, for mighty Saul shuddered."

Once more the singer takes up his harp. He sings now of the king's past life—of tender memories, great achievements, national fame, high endowments. There are recollections of early days, of brothers playing happily about the family home before " shades of the prison-house " had begun to gather about this life, of Saul's father handing on the sword to the youth so gallant and strong; of the aged mother praising God upon her death-bed:

" Let one more attest,
I have lived, seen God's hand thro' a lifetime, and all was for best."

He sang of the ways by which God's hand had led Saul to be king, of the love of his people, of:

" High ambition and deeds which surpass it, fame crowning it,—all
Brought to blaze on the head of one creature—King Saul!"

And here the benumbed soul was aroused.

"Then Saul, who hung propt
By the tent's cross-support in the centre, was struck by his name."

It reminded David of the falling of the snow from the face of the mountain under the rays of the returning Sun when "Spring's arrowy summons goes right to the aim," leaving before you "stark, black, but alive yet, your mountain of old."

But not yet may the minstrel lay aside his harp. Saul had been roused out of numbness—that was all. He was awake, but not to hope. Life creeps sluggishly within his veins. He has come forth from the tomb, but remains "bound hand and foot with grave clothes," still waiting for the voice which commands "Loose him and let him go."

What can be done further? David had risen steadily in his appeal. The song of the pasture-land had been lost in the glad strain of human existence; the joy of life had risen to the social relationship of home and the nation; all had merged at last in the splendour of the throne.

But now he soars to higher ranges of thought and feeling. Taking the harp he sings of that which abides when the body decays, of the immortality of influence which belongs to those who do noble deeds, of the "palm-wine" which heals and comforts when "the palm's-self" has ceased to be. He summons the king to live by the spirit:

"So, each ray of thy will,
Every flash of thy passion and prowess, long over, shall thrill
Thy whole people, the countless, with ardour, till they too give forth
A like cheer to their sons, who in turn, fill the South and the North
With the radiance thy deed was the germ of."

At that call Saul became a new man. He sat down clothed and in his right mind. Under the influence of the new spirit that fell upon him, the gloomy giant-king became human and tender. This is the Saul whom God chose and who stormed the hearts of the people. He places his hand on David's brow, bending back the singer's head "in kind power" and looking into his face "intent to peruse it, as men do a flower."

Looking upon his hero-king's face the heart of David almost broke within him in love and desire to bless. Oh, how he longed to save this man and bring back that which had been lost through sin. But what can he do? There are limitations to the power of human love.

"I would give thee new life altogether, as good, ages hence
As this moment—had love but the warrant, love's heart to dispense."

All he had done for Saul was little compared with what he desired for him. To restore this life to God, to send this king forth with heart healed and redeemed, to make him an inheritor of eternal life, how willingly would he lay down his own life as sacrifice! But alas, love has not always "the warrant, love's heart to dispense."

It was at that hour—in the splendid passion of unselfish desire, when he would fain do all for this man he loved, that the truth came upon David. He lays aside his harp, he lifts no song. Another speaks through him now truths too great for human thought to reach. He himself

becomes the harp upon which the Master Melodist utters the message of Immortal Love.

"It is by a kind of inspiration," wrote Tyndall, "That men have risen from the observation of facts to the discovery of some general law." The Scientist is not afraid of that word "inspiration." His final perception of law seems to "be given" to him though, of course, it is always to the prepared mind that the inspiration comes. None the less is there a leap forward beyond the fact, and many explorers frankly confess that they cannot trace the way by which they arrived. All of which is true of the inspiration which comes to the world's prophets and teachers. They were prepared by reverence, worship, purity, prayer, and thus gave God His opportunity to make Himself known to them as He could not do to others. They too cannot always tell the method. The truth was given to them by an inspiration. So does David describe his experience as, from the contemplation of his own love, he was led to believe in the Universal Law of Love.

"Then at the summit of human endeavour,
And scaling the highest man's thought could,
gazed hopeless as ever

On the new stretch of heaven above me—till mighty to save,
Just one lift of Thy hand cleared that distance—God's throne from man's grave."

The message which God revealed to David that never-to-be-forgotten day was simply that which we have heard fall from our Lord's lips. "If ye being evil know how to give good gifts—how much more shall your heavenly Father." He sat down before the facts of his own nature as a little child, and then was swept beyond himself by a kind of inspiration.

"Have I knowledge? confounded it shrivels at Wisdom laid bare.
Have I forethought? how purblind, how blank to the Infinite Care!
Do I task any faculty highest, to image success?
I but open my eyes—and perfection, no more and no less,
In the kind I imagined, full-fronts me, and God is seen God."

"But here within me," reasons David, "is love! This day pity has almost broken my heart in vain desire to help my king. Can I surpass God

in this? My power, my wisdom, my forethought are confounded in the thought of His perfections. Outstripping me at every point, in every faculty, will He not most of all outstrip me in love which is man's highest? Surely it must be so! To infer Divine power from human power—and Divine Wisdom from human knowledge—and be afraid to infer Divine Love from human love is "to have faith in the least things, distrust in the greatest of all."

"Do I find love so full in my nature, God's ultimate gift,
That I doubt His own love can compete with it? Here, the parts shift?
Here, the creatures surpass the Creator, the end, what Began?
Would I fain in my impotent yearning do all for this man,
And dare doubt He alone shall not help him, Who yet alone can?"

These questions, pressing upon the speaker's mind, made vivid and impressive within his own burning heart, prepare us for the inevitable conclusion. There, before him, is King Saul "the mistake, the failure:"

" the same God did choose
To receive what a man may waste, desecrate,
never quite lose."

To bring redemption to such an one is no easy task:

" It is by no breath,
Turn of eye, wave of hand, that salvation joins
issue with death."

But if human love would grow poor to enrich him, " to fill up his life starve my own out," how much more would Divine love hasten forward to secure his salvation? For Infinite Love is allied with Infinite Power and Wisdom, so that things impossible to man are possible to God. Thus David swept forward until in a splendid flash of inspiration he " sees the Christ stand " Who will accomplish human salvation.

" O speak through me now! " prayed the seer trembling on the verge of this great revelation.

" Would I suffer for him that I love? So wouldst
Thou—so wilt Thou!
So shall crown Thee the topmost, ineffablest,
uttermost crown—

And Thy love fill infinitude wholly, not leave up nor down
One spot for the creature to stand in."

"On His head were many crowns," declared the prisoner of the Lord in the isle of Patmos. Our Lord wears the crowns of wisdom, of power, and every perfection. But His *ineffable* crown is that of Love. The greatest thing on the earth is the greatest thing in Heaven. So it is written that "God *commendeth* His love toward us." His uttermost glory is that which He holds up before man's astonished eyes.

Now that the door is opened before him, David presses boldly forward. Love in man is always helpful: it sacrifices and suffers in order to save. And though the power of human love is easily exhausted, yet, it is not what a man does that measures his greatness, but what he "would do." Here again God's Love will lead Him to do *His best.*

"He who did most, shall bear most; the strongest shall stand the most weak,
'Tis the weakness in strength that I cry for! my flesh, that I seek
In the Godhead!"

Love explores the mystery yet to be revealed, "He Who did most," the Creator, "shall bear most—shall stand the most weak" shall be the Redeemer. This is the luminous certainty for which the heart cries.

"I seek and I find it. O Saul, it shall be
A Face like my face that receives thee; a Man
like to me,
Thou shalt love and be loved by, forever; a Hand
like this hand
Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee;
see the Christ stand."

David's work was ended. The experience was almost more than the soul of the seer could endure. How he found his way home he could not tell. It seemed to him that vast spiritual powers and intelligences thronged his path. The world was very beautiful next morning for a new hope had entered its heart. All created things felt its influence:

"And the little brooks witnessing, murmured,
persistent and low,
With their obstinate, all but hushed voices, 'E'en
so, it is so.'"

That is how Browning gives powerful and vital exposition to our Lord's words in the passage which forms the basis of our present study.

We see how love bears *the passion of sacrifice* within itself. Standing in the dark tent confronted by the mad king, David would pour out his fresh young life to save and redeem. We are reminded of the *limitations* of human love. Assailed by the sin and sorrow of Saul, the shepherd-boy is made aware of the insufficiency of all his efforts. Love will always do its best. "Had love but the warrant love's heart to dispense" he would give this ruined king blessedness in life for ever. But evil is strongly entrenched and sometimes defies every human effort to storm its stronghold. Then comes the *inspiration* of love. If David would give all to save this man, how much more will be done by that Eternal Love which has all wisdom and all power at its command! If the shepherd-singer would leave no means untried, no word unspoken, no song unuttered to reach this stony heart, surely there is One Who will seek until He find. If human love would sit in darkness with the imprisoned king, how much more shall "the Dayspring from

on high rise upon us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace!"

One is reminded of that moving scene in the later life of David, depicted by the inspired writer. The days of the king had been darkened by many evil things, and his home rent by bitter dissensions. At last one of the sons became an ingrate, stole away the heart of many subjects from their king, and conspired with them against the throne. For a time David was a fugitive before the armies of Absalom. Then news came of the rebel's defeat and death. And this is the reading of that ancient scripture: "When David heard that Absalom his son was dead, the king went up to the chamber over the gate and wept, and as he went, he said, 'Oh, my son, Absalom my son, my son Absalom, would God I had died for thee, Absalom, my son, my son.'" We need no explanation of that story. It is a human document luminous to the heart. Love is very sensitive. Love bears the shameful cross. Love is wonderfully patient and constant. "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the waves drown it." And this is human love. It is small in comparison with the Divine Love.

But it helps us to understand the deep mystery of the Evangel. We have seen human love stoop, and hence dare believe in the Incarnation. We have seen in human hearts the "rage to suffer" for others, and can therefore rest ourselves in the Cross of our Redeemer.

"See the Christ stand." Astronomers anticipated the coming of some undiscovered body in the heavens. They said "It is there, and some day it will be seen." Searching the firmament with this expectation they, at last, cried in triumph: "See Neptune stand!" Many were the anticipations of the coming of the Redeemer. Prophets and seers strained their eyes across the ages for Him Who was to fulfil their hopes, and accomplish their hearts' desire. At last He came. He was made manifest unto us. He stands before our hearts' adoration, the central, peerless, Universal Figure of human history. He came to make known the Father's love. He came also "that the *thoughts of many hearts* might be revealed." This deep reasoning of love has been forever confirmed by the glorious appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE: "THE SCARLET LETTER"

The Fact of Sin

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE: "THE SCARLET LETTER" *

THE FACT OF SIN

"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture was turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin."

PSALM XXXII. 1-5.

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

1 JOHN I. 8-9.

IN LORD MORLEY'S "Essay on Emerson" a grave defect is pointed out in the teaching of that great philosopher. Emerson failed to realise,

* I gratefully acknowledge my indebtedness in the preparation of this Lecture to Sir W. Robertson Nicoll's "Murtle Lecture" published in *The British Weekly* on November 5th, 1908.

declares the essayist, "that horrid burden and impediment on the soul which the churches call sin, and which, by whatever name we call it, is a very real catastrophe in the moral nature of man." Probably most careful readers of Emerson have been conscious, in some degree, of the almost casual manner in which he deals with certain phases of life. Persuasive and powerful as he is, we feel, at times, that real experiences of the soul are being glozed over by eloquent words and phrases. Morley's criticism, however, is quoted here because it comes from one who could not be classed as a religious teacher. He may be uncertain of God; his views on the Bible are not ours; but he does not for a moment question the fact and power of sin. That is real. Its existence cannot be denied.

Some have assumed that sin is a creation of the Bible, a product of the hour of worship, a projection of priest and prophet upon the consciousness of the race. It is true that religion, by its pure revelation, deepens our sense of failure; but the sense of sin was in existence before the Bible. The disease was felt when the remedy was unknown; the riddle perplexed human thought be-

fore the answer was proclaimed. It is a moral contradiction within the soul, which has been seen and deplored by the world's wisest teachers through all the ages.

We have included this subject in our course of study because we have seen so many fair and promising lives wrecked by a lack of its consideration. Theories of sin may be postponed, but the catastrophe itself should be taken into account by all, and especially by those who are commencing the voyage of life. We are urged by some to cut ancient moorings and to go out for ourselves to learn what happens to free souls. It is important then to have dangerous reefs and sweeping currents marked clearly upon the chart. What I am anxious to insist upon is, that when we turn to the testimonies of those great souls who, it would seem, have been raised up to see things as they are, and to tell us, each in his own way, what they have seen, we find, that whatever is absent, the fact of sin is there. They use varying terminology; they may entertain no feeblest hope of its removal; but it cannot be overlooked. The fact is there. It is no morbid dream to the man who has seen beneath the surface of things. Guilt is

the theme of the world's greatest tragedies. It is something inveterate, self-destructive, with fatal power upon the fairest things in the soul and the world. On an ancient Assyrian tablet there was found a broken line containing but one word, and that was the word "Evil." Sad indeed are the lines which have no message of deliverance to add; but the good tidings will be unheeded while the fact is unconsidered. And so, before we go out in this suggested revolt, let us make quite certain that we shall not be found in rebellion against the nature of things.

> *"Heard are the voices,*
> *Heard are the sages,*
> *Choose well! Your choice is*
> *Brief and yet endless."*

There are two volumes which every wise man will keep open before his eyes, and which are so intimately related, that to understand one, we must needs be familiar with the other. One is the book of human nature, which all may read in themselves, if they will but turn and consider their own hearts. "Man, know thyself" is the ancient counsel, to which many have given no heed. Men

were interested in the heavens before they turned to the greater wonders of the world within their own minds. Astronomy is an older science than psychology. But to read the word aright, which God has written upon our moral nature, we need those messages of hope which centre in our Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible throws a flood of light upon the secret longings, the sweeping spiritual tides, the fierce conflicts of man's spiritual history.

It is equally necessary that we should acquire some knowledge of ourselves before we can possess the Word of God as an unsealed book. Its messages are not intelligible to him who has never sunk a shaft into the depths of his own consciousness, and taken earnest consideration of the discord and anguish which arise from the fact of indwelling sin. To read the New Testament, without first questioning our hearts, is like striving to read some book whose master words and phrases are unknown to us. Christianity is a response to our need. It is God's reply to man's cry. There are Bible passages which can only be read by a broken heart. The balm of Gilead implies some inward wound. "They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick,"

declared the Master. He was speaking then to men who had never discovered themselves, and who could not therefore discover Him.

It is when we have dared to withdraw ourselves from the whirl of outward things into the secret places of our own lives, and have found there the mysterious forces which conflict with the best that is in us; the forbidden imaginations that hold revelry in God's appointed temple, the hateful memories, and infirmities of purpose, the indolence, the pride, the ungenerous judgments, the self-centredness, and all those powers which we know not how to crush, but which, unrestrained, will inflict harm upon others and wound the Christ-life within us—it is then that we turn to welcome that Word of God which speaks of pardon and of power to redeem. When we know ourselves, we may in some measure understand how it came to pass that Jesus the Mighty One—Who found remedies for hunger and disease, for madness and even physical death, Who could by a word hush the winds and waves—that the same Jesus found Himself "amazed and sore troubled" by the dread power of moral wrong, so that there fell upon Him an "agony and bloody sweat," and

at last, a broken heart, as He wrought for men deliverance from life's inexorable and most dreadful curse.

We who live at the beginning of the twentieth century have come into a great heritage of literature in this study of the mind. Modern English writers may help us to understand that we are dealing with real things and not with dream-creations, when we deal with the sense of obligation and the loss caused by disobedience. I do not refer to theologians or preachers; but to the dramatists, the poets, the novelists, who have most deeply impressed themselves upon our age. What do they proclaim? What is the fact to which they point and of which they say. "Thou ailest here"? It is the dissonance between what the soul is, and what the soul knows it ought to be. They do not use our words. Perhaps we might be wise to restate our doctrine and use words which live and not those which are dead except in limited circles. But these great writers, however variously they express themselves, mean the same thing. It is sometimes a cry like that of some trapped animal, as in Burns or Byron, struggling hopelessly with grim fettering forces which fill

the soul with madness; it is sometimes stern and inexorable, like an echo from the prophets of ancient Judæan hills, as in Carlyle and Ruskin; it is sometimes analytic, a passionless disquisition on the moral ailment, as in Meredith and Ibsen; it is sometimes satiric as in Dickens and Thackeray; it is sometimes the clarion call of some strong warrior from the heart of the conflict as in Browning. But it is always there. Sin is there. And judgment is there. The drapery is not that of some remote tribunal. It is present. It is very actual. We close our Bibles and think we have done with the unpleasant fact. But our modern books are full of it. Our great writers are like John the Baptist, they preach of the desert-heart of man; they show us the wilderness side of life, and in so far as they do that, they may prepare us for the coming of the Son of Man, Who alone can make "the wilderness rejoice and blossom as the rose."

But what are we to say to Sir Oliver Lodge's frequently quoted statement, "that the modern man is not worrying about his sin at all, still less about its punishment"? There can be no denial of its essential truth. When we seek an

explanation of the general indifference of the people to the Christian message, this is one feature of the modern mind which must be taken into account. There is a questioning of the assumption upon which the appeal is made. Perhaps it is true that the conviction of sin is taking another form, and that the pulpit has not yet availed itself of the new quickening of the social conscience. But whatever be the explanation, it must not be imagined that the man of to-day has nothing to worry about. Our opinions and moods do not alter facts. A man may be drifting towards bankruptcy in his business, and may not worry about it; may not even be aware of it; but the catastrophe is not hindered, for one moment, by his indifference. Most people were not worrying about the condition of Europe before the War. Men listened complacently to the outcome of materialistic doctrines in the denial of the Christian Ethic. We had, apparently, been over-scrupulous in our moral restraints. It was very piquant and refreshing to have the ancient moralities mocked. Something was to be said in favour of Nietzsche and of others. Was there not the Ethic of Naturalism in the "Struggle for Existence"?

We would go out, at all events, and find how far ruthlessness in self-seeking might carry us. Then something happened. It came like a bolt from the blue. And—we have been worrying ever since. We discovered that we were trifling with facts not words, with laws, not theories. There is something wild and anarchic in human nature, which, without restraint, will destroy like some great river that suddenly overflows its banks. Things are what they are, and they in no wise depend upon our acceptance or our rejection.

Did we worry about the selfishness of our social system? Some looked into the dark abyss of poverty and disease, and uttered their warnings. They proclaimed that we were sowing the wind and must reap the whirlwind. But men said, "It is inevitable," and went their way. Now we see that it cannot be; selfishness cannot lead us anywhere save to chaos. Everybody knows now that something is essentially wrong; that is to say, we are being convicted of sin in our social relationships. If we mock when God speaks in words, He speaks in deeds, until mockery dies upon our foolish lips.

The Judge of the Universe does not hold his

office by human suffrage. His laws do not tarry in their execution for human consent. The moral forces of the world, as President Wilson has said, "do not threaten, they operate." That was the Master's meaning surely when He asked the Pharisees, "How shall ye escape the judgement of Gehenna?" If a man is about to fling himself down some precipice, under the delusion that no harm will come to him, it is only sanity to ask him how he hopes to escape. To Jesus it was all so clear, the peril was so real that the question came spontaneously to His lips: "If you go on after this fashion, how can you escape?"* The moral laws under which we live are as inevitable as the laws we deduce from the reactions of matter and force. They are not the creations of imaginative minds; they have been seen, in their operations, by those who have looked most deeply into the workings of human nature. Their penalties

* The same warning was uttered by the prophet Amos (vi. 12) to the rulers of Israel who were turning the moral order upside down: "Can horses be driven with impunity on the edge of the precipice, or oxen put to plough in the sea without being drowned? How then can Israel hope to escape, if she continue to turn justice into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood." See Dr. Gordon's translation in "The Prophets of the Old Testament," p. 40.

may be read in the withering of precious things within the disobedient soul; they have been written in the sad chapters of human history. "My people do not know, they do not consider," runs the ancient complaint. If they had considered they would have been incapable of such stupendous folly. The major part of the sin of the world is due to the fatal fault of inattention.

In selecting Nathaniel Hawthorne's masterpiece, "The Scarlet Letter," as the basis of our study, we have chosen what is admitted to be one of the most powerful and influential books produced on the American Continent. The author is one of the great explorers of the human mind; his book has become a classic in studies of the soul. Mr. Emile Montégut, one of Hawthorne's acutest critics, objected to his "obsession by sin" as his gravest fault. It has been declared by another eminent writer that in "The Scarlet Letter" we have a portrayal of the Puritan sense of sin without any other than an artistic interest. The novelist wrote to picture what existed, at a certain early stage in the life of New England, just as one might have striven to make real any other of its customs. But, if this is true,

how is it that so little is made here of sin in its relation to God? Nothing was so marked in the Puritan conscience as its sense of estrangement from God by the fact of sin, and also its hope of reconciliation to Him by His Infinite mercy. This book has little direct reference to either. The power of sin is portrayed in its working upon the soul, and in its influence upon others, and all this in words that agonise like fire. The setting of the drama is a Puritan community, but the laws which control the situation are timeless. As I read the story, I feel as if some keen biologist had led me to look through his lenses and his polarised light at some inward suppressed disease, working out of sight, but surely undermining and disintegrating the structure of the organism. Hawthorne has no remedy. We must turn elsewhere for that. But he is terrible in revealing the ailment. It would be well to keep our New Testament open by our side as we read this book, for though Hawthorne does not preach Christ as Redeemer, he has tremendous power to make us feel our need of Him.

There are only four characters in the book. The first is the Rev. Arthur Dimmesdale, a bril-

liant young preacher, who has come over to New England from one of the great centres of education in the Old Land; an earnest, spiritual man, but with a streak of animalism interweaving itself through his high moral qualities. He has fallen into sin with Hester Prynne, a young wife, married against her choice to a man much older than herself. Hester had been sent over to New England by her husband, some years before he himself crossed. The offspring of this guilty love is a strange child named Pearl. The fourth character is the husband, known in the book as Roger Chillingworth, who arrives upon the scene to find his wife enduring public shame as a punishment for her unchastity.

All four characters are present in the opening scene. Hester Prynne stands on the scaffold, in the market-place of Salem, with her child in her arms, and on her breast she wears the scarlet letter, "A," proclaiming the fact that she is an adulteress. She has refused to reveal the name of her companion in sin, and Arthur Dimmesdale, as her minister, is made to exhort her, in the presence of the whole community, to proclaim the paternity of her child. On the outskirts of

the crowd stands Roger Chillingworth, unknown to any other in the village, but seen and recognised to her terror by Hester Prynne on that dreadful day. That night he visited Hester in the prison, and extorted from her the promise that she would never make known to any in the settlement that he is her husband.

The minister goes about his work; he redoubles his zeal; he grows in power and influence, but his conscience affords him no rest. By a strange power of soul over body, the fiery pain within him burns outward, and leaves its impression on the flesh. His life withers away. But it is within that the supreme loss occurs. Delicate filaments that should have joined the soul to the spiritual world droop in anguish; the chords of his moral nature vibrate only to disease and pain. The secrecy of his sin made it the harder to bear. He felt that the world was full of inquisitors, each striving to tear out the heart of his dark mystery. And there was one who had discovered his guilt, who possessed the key which would open, to all the world, the door behind which he sought to hide his shame, and who played upon his fears and remorse, like some pitiless spirit without

human heart. One day Roger Chillingworth finds his victim sleeping and unfastens the minister's neckband, and finds that where Hester wears the embroidered scarlet "A," the Rev. Arthur Dimmesdale bears, branded on his very flesh, the same letter, stamped there, by that inward remorse, to which he was always subject. His sin was secret, and his life was a falsehood. All the good he strove to do by his ministry, all for which he was held in such high honour by the people, was rooted in dishonour. He knew himself to be a hypocrite and a coward. His place should have been on the pillory by the side of Hester Prynne. Had he been a worse man, he might have tired his conscience out; but being what he was, the punishment was more than he could bear. Arthur Dimmesdale said with the Psalmist of old: "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture was turned into the drought of summer."

We will not stay to discuss the details of this dramatic study of the working of sin in human life. Its central message is all we need to accept. The moral imperative has power over us

because we are members of a moral world. It is not some morbid dream which has haunted the generations, but an august and eternal reality. If we go out in rebellion and break its laws, we suffer. The nobler natures are aware of their loss; the ignorance of others does not alter the fact. If I cannot appreciate music, if I am unmoved by beauty, it is because of some defect in me. And this world of truth and right is real, and we belong to it. Arthur Dimmesdale knew this. Hence he suffered when his life was false and impure. If he had not suffered, his loss would have been still greater. His pain is the proof that he is not dead.

Meantime Hester Prynne lived with her child in a cottage by the beach, almost entirely cut off from intercourse with the community. Her lot was brighter than that of the minister. She took hold on life where she could. When allowed to do so, she would help the poor. Her child she clung to as if she found no other secure hold upon life. There are disease germs which perish in the open: they nourish themselves away from sunshine and fresh air. The wide spaces of the sea and the uplands which

front the heavens are germ-free. Hester lived in the open. She had nothing to hide. And her life was healthier than that of the man whom she sought to shield from public shame.

But was she happy? One day the minister met her and asked wistfully: "'Hester, hast thou found peace?' She smiled drearily and looked down upon her bosom. 'Hast thou?' she asked." She does not stand alone.

How can she find peace when others suffer loss? Every one concerned bears the consequences of that guilty deed. Arthur Dimmesdale was not the only sufferer. Loveless as her marriage had been, Hester could not look unmoved on such a transformation as had taken place in Roger Chillingworth. "Dost thou remember me, Hester, as I was nine years ago? Even then I was in the autumn of my days, nor was it the early autumn. But all my life had been made up of earnest, studious, thoughtful, quiet years, bestowed faithfully, too, for the advancement of human welfare. No life had been more peaceful and innocent than mine: few lives so rich with benefits conferred. Dost thou remember me? Was I not, though you might

deem me cold, nevertheless a man thoughtful for others, craving little for himself,—kind, just, true and of constant if not warm affections? Was I not all this?" "All this and more," said Hester.

"And what am I now?" demanded he, looking into her face and permitting the whole evil within him to be written on his features. "I have already told thee what I am. A fiend. Who made me so?"

"It was myself," cried Hester, shuddering. "It was I, not less than he."

Here is something further to be considered. Sin has social issues. It does not end with itself. It is an invasion upon the rights of others. We are so placed in the world that we cannot act for ourselves without reaching out to others. There is, as a certain wise woman pointed out to an infuriated man long ago, "a bundle of life." We are held together by bonds which cannot be severed. Selfishness is a repudiation of the law of service and social obligation. We have seen how evil writes its fiery message upon the enslaved soul; were that all, it would be a dreadful work; but it is not content with its

devastation there; it burns outward upon the community.

We may look for the sense of sin in our day through the quickening of the social conscience. The Holy Ghost is teaching us how selfishness poisons human relationships, and wounds God through His children. If, as the Psalmist declared, "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh" at man's puny attempts to defy His kingly power, He does not laugh when He sees man's inhumanity to man. If we may do as we please with our own, forgetting in our guilty passion that we ourselves have been bought with a price, there remains still that which is not our own. God has entrusted us with each other's happiness. Selfishness is not merely a social crime; it is a sin. We shall confess, when our eyes are opened, that our self-indulgence was a fraud upon others, that our greed created want, that we were unmindful of the human need which cried aloud for help.

"He that is not with Me is against Me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad," said Jesus. Have we sufficiently considered this aspect of disobedience to Him? If we divide one

from another we are against Him. He is the Great Gatherer, and those who are in harmony with His gracious spirit are the world's healers and reconcilers. Selfishness divides everywhere, not only by its gross manifestations, as in this present study, but in a thousand unnoticed ways it disturbs social peace and hinders social union.

Some years ago Mr. John W. Graham, who was then the Principal of Dalton Hall, Manchester, wrote a book entitled "The Destruction of Daylight," which demonstrated the enormous harm done in the cities of Britain by the clouds of smoke which befoul and darken the air. During the five winter months of 1898-9, the amount of sunshine in London was only twelve per cent of what was astronomically possible, and in an average winter, the Londoner hardly enjoys even half as much sunshine as those living in the country parts of Southern England. The writer declared that the working life of the people living in the centre of Manchester is curtailed to the extent of ten years by the smoke nuisance. He thought the matter might be dealt with, but people were heedless. "They did not know, they did not consider." Selfishness beclouds the heavens and

shuts out the light from ourselves and from others; it befouls the air and makes it harder for other souls to breathe and live. Our commerce, our politics, our art, our literature and our homes are beshadowed and poisoned by its baneful presence. And we have not considered, and we have not known. But the Master of Life and Light saw how men were suffering, and came to deliver "those who sat in darkness."

And He said unto them: "Who is my mother, and who are my brethren? . . . Whosoever shall do the will of my Father Who is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." He meant that He was in the world to create a new human relationship, closer than that of blood, a relationship arising out of obedience and surrender to God. There is no other secure bond. The man who strikes at the will of God, strikes at and harms himself and others. Sin is not a shooting of poisoned arrows into empty space at a Deity who sits upon a remote and inaccessible throne; it is a denial of that gracious Spirit Who cries within our hearts to save us from being unjust and unmerciful to ourselves and others. Disobedience to the Will of God is not a sterile thing;

it has various social consequences. It is an unholy leaven which disintegrates the unity and impoverishes the happiness of mankind.

An attempt to escape by an unlawful road was made by Arthur Dimmesdale and Hester Prynne. They determined to depart together for some unknown shore where the shame of their past would be unknown, and Roger Chillingworth shaken off. This plan of running away from confession, and perpetuating an unlawful life, affected both immediately. Hester found herself shunned by Pearl, her little child, whose love seemed inspired to divine the new decision which burned in her mother's breast. In the soul of the minister, the sweeping away of restraint liberated a legion of unholy passions. He was tempted to pour blasphemies and infidelities into the ears of his own parishioners. There is no hope in that direction. The way is narrow and the gate is strait by which they must now find deliverance.

The closing scene in the book brings the four characters together again in the market-place of Salem. A new governor had been appointed over the community, and Arthur Dimmesdale

had preached the election sermon. Never had he preached with such power; never had his hearers been so profoundly moved by his appeal. The procession had formed and was leaving the church when suddenly the minister leaves the ranks and summoning Hester and Pearl to his side, he mounts that same pillory in the market-place. Roger Chillingworth, discerning the intention, and knowing that his victim, by a public confession, would escape his clutches, strove to deter the deed, but Dimmesdale would not be detained. "Hadst thou sought the whole earth over," exclaimed that pitiless inquisitor, as he saw the clergyman mount the scaffold, "there was no one place so secret,—no high place, nor lowly place, where thou couldst have escaped me,—save on this very scaffold."

There Dimmesdale unburdened his heart of its intolerable burden in the presence of the people.

"At last!—at last—I stand upon the spot where, seven years since, I should have stood. . . . Lo, the scarlet letter which Hester wears! Ye have all shuddered at it. Wherever her walk hath been, —wherever, so miserably burdened, she may have hoped to find repose,—it hath cast a lurid gleam

of awe and horrible repugnance round about her. But there stood one in the midst of you, at whose brand of sin and infamy ye have not shuddered!"

"It was on him! God's eye beheld it! The angels were for ever pointing at it! The devil knew it well, and fretted it continually with the touch of his burning finger! But he hid it cunningly from men, and walked among you with the mien of a spirit, mournful, because so pure in a sinful world!—and sad, because he missed his heavenly kindred! Now, at the death-hour he stands up before you! He bids you look again at Hester's scarlet letter! He tells you that, with all its mysterious horror, it is but the shadow of what he bears on his own breast, and that even this, his own red stigma, is no more than the type of what has seared his inmost heart! Stand any here that question God's judgment on a sinner? Behold!—behold a dreadful witness of it!"

"With a convulsive motion he tore away the ministerial band from before his breast. It was revealed!"

He dies on the scaffold with little Pearl's kiss

upon his lips, and Roger Chillingworth's baffled cry in his ears, "Thou hast escaped me! Thou hast escaped me!"

It is so that Nathaniel Hawthorne portrays sin. These are the messages embodied in "The Scarlet Letter." He proclaimed a penalty within the mind, and that, though no tribunal exist in the heaven above, there is an inexorable judge within the soul from whose sentence there is no escape. He shows how sin escapes the confines of our own hearts and throws its dreadful gloom upon others. He insists upon the need for confession; that one must be true at all costs; that a hidden sin is like some fungous growth which saps away our moral health. All of which we needed to be taught again in an age inclined to deal lightly with moral faults.

But one closes the book feeling the need for some further word. The law, declared St. Paul, is a "schoolmaster to bring us to Christ." This searching analysis of sin should act in this way. When they asked Mayer how he came to discover the principle of the conservation of energy, he replied, "for the sufficient reason that I felt the need of it." Reading this book, makes

one feel the need of Christ's redeeming and forgiving grace. If Hawthorne had read his New Testament as earnestly and as searchingly as he read the human heart, how great and inspiring would have been the gospel he would have had to preach. For there is Another wounded by our sin. We could have no power over Him "except it were given us;" but He Himself has bestowed the power. His love has made Him vulnerable. And those wounds became redemptive. Our fathers sang "Fly to those dear wounds of His." But we caused those wounds! True! That is the gospel in a word. Love takes to itself the shame and pain of sin, and so is able to save without dishonouring the majesty of law. Christ is God's answer to our cry. He comes to hear the confession which burdens our hearts, and with authority to forgive sins.

There are three steps in Dante's vision which lead to the place of hope. The first is of white polished marble, so white, so clear, that he who looks thereon can see his face reflected. The second step is dark, rough, rugged, and cracked across its whole surface. The third is red, blood-red. On the third step God's angel stands guard-

ing the door, lest those enter who have no right there.

Three steps there are, by which we may pass into Christ's land of hope. The first is white and clear, for therein must we see and know ourselves. The second is dark and rough and cracked: he who stands thereon must have pride broken and heart humbled before the searching light. We have trodden these two steps under the guidance of this modern moralist. But there is a third, which he did not know, and hence his characters remain outside God's deep peace to the end. The third stone is red, blood-red, and it proclaims the anguish and the triumph of God's amazing love. It is a very sure ground on which to stand, and from it millions have passed into deathless hope.

"My blood so red
For thee was shed.
Come home again! Come home again!
My own dear heart, come home again.
You've gone astray,
Far from your way.
Come home again! Come home again!"

JOHN MASEFIELD: "THE EVERLASTING MERCY"

The Fact of Conversion

JOHN MASEFIELD: "THE EVERLASTING MERCY"

THE FACT OF CONVERSION

"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

2 Corinthians iv. 6.

"No man can say that Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Spirit."

1 Corinthians xii. 3.

THE FACT of Conversion, declares the Apostle, is as truly the act of God, as is the birth of light. It cannot be achieved without the grace of Him, "Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness." The spiritual change involved in the acceptance of the authority of Christ is so stupendous, that without the aid of the Holy Spirit, it cannot be accomplished. It is He Who leads us to say, "Jesus is Lord," quickening the bruised conscience, informing the mind, creating an ever-deepening sense of need, and in manifold ways ministering to the heart as its Supreme

Evangelist. From the first wistful look of the soul standing afar until its completed return, He is its helper, present in every movement, as the sun is present in the growth of the flower from a tightly closed bud to the beauty and fragrance of the full-blown rose.

Much attention has been given in recent days to the Psychology of Conversion. The fact has been approached from the scientific standpoint and, after much investigation, it stands as one of the admitted elements in the shaping of human character. The psychologist is very ready to take up the great word " Conversion " which some timid believers are inclined to lay aside. Professor James Ward, in his book just published, entitled, " Psychological Principles," a work which may be claimed to be the final pronouncement of that eminent student of the human mind on this important doctrine, declares his belief in Conversion as emphatically as any evangelical preacher. " Crises in the development of personality," he writes, " are the rule rather than the exception." And of such crises the most notable instance is what " is familiarly known in religious experience as conversion or second birth." To

those who contend that the new consciousness of God which comes to the twice-born soul is not verifiable because it is founded on faith, he further maintains, as a psychologist, that it is by faith men have actually attained "to the highest rank of personalities."

It should be remembered that the psychologist deals with methods—not with causes. Here, in a word, we have the difference between the evangelist and the scientist. The former approaches the fact of Conversion from the Divine side; the latter from the human. It is the cause which is important to the one; the "method" alone occupies the attention of the other. It is an excellent illustration of the harmonious relationship which should exist between labourers in the two great realms of religion and science.

Have we had any light thrown upon the fact of Conversion by those who have studied it merely as an interesting phenomenon of the mind? There need be no hesitation in admitting our indebtedness to such men as the late Professor William James, who, after impartial and systematic study of this experience, have, in some cases, felt justified in laying down certain ascertainable

laws by which it is conditioned. It is not safe to dogmatise on these movements of the soul, for "the Spirit bloweth where it listeth," and, in this vast and mysterious spirit world, exceptions continually appear which point to some larger generalisation than we have yet attained. Some points, however, the Church may accept as revelations of the method of Divine grace in the conversion of the soul.

We have been taught the persistent life of some seed-thought sown in childhood's days. In studying the history of the regenerate soul, observers have found that, in the vast majority of instances, the change was brought about by the emergence of some early memory or association of home or school. "I must write now," said a soldier who found God at the Base, and this was the order of his correspondence, "to my mother, to my Sunday-school teacher, and to my minister." We must understand that the child-mind cannot be left fallow. It is our opportunity for sowing the seed, which one day may cover with its golden harvest the surface of the whole life.

Emphasis has been placed also upon the influence of Temperament in conversion. The

phlegmatic temperament is not likely to experience a transformation of the explosive, soul-shattering type, which may be expected in those of a more eager and impulsive nature. The realisation of this generally accepted law would have saved many noble hearts from misgiving. It is pathetic to find that most saintly and devoted man, Jonathan Edwards, writing in his Diary: "The chief thing that now makes me in any measure question my good estate is, my not having experienced conversion, in those particular steps, wherein the people of New England, and anciently the people of Old England, used to experience it." We are happily delivered from the idea that conversion to be genuine must conform to a type. The sun's rays are not more different, when reflected from diverse surfaces, than are the varieties of experience accomplished in regenerate souls by the action of the same Spirit.

Very practical also is the stress laid by these observers upon "adolescence" as the psychological period for spiritual decision. Exaggerated statements, it is true, have been made on this point by earnest men. Some of the most influen-

tial spiritual surrenders in history have been achieved by the Holy Spirit only after years of patient waiting. But it is certain that "adolescence" brings with it certain urgings of the soul which should naturally end in creative decisions for Christ and His Kingdom. In that hour, when the vision opens upon broader horizons, when new ideals rise into power over the mind, when hero-worship moves the heart to rare devotion, there should be presented, with studied thought and careful earnestness, the claims of Christ, in Whom truth and beauty are joined in everlasting union. He is always God's response to our human need; but never does He more completely demonstrate His mission than when He meets the soul, in its search for one whom it can love, trust, and obey for ever.

While we are grateful to those who have studied the fact of conversion from this human side, we must not overlook the other aspect, of which religion takes special account. The Bible deals with causes, not with laws. It is so everywhere. We shall be disappointed if we search its pages to find a method of creation; but not if we go seeking the Creator. Theories of light

are not propounded there; but we read: "And God said, Let there be light, and there was light." In passing from the work of a modern psychologist to the New Testament, one becomes conscious of an entirely different standpoint. We now view the fact of conversion from its Divine side. Here we find no methods or theories, except by way of suggestion. The insistent note is that it is an act of God, as astonishing as the gift of a new day. The text which we placed at the forefront of our study sums up the message of the whole wonderful literature: "God, Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts."

Thorwaldsen, the Dane, owed far more to Rome than to his native country, and when he was asked what his birthday was, he answered: "I don't know; I came for the first time to Rome on March 8th, 1797." Everything else was of minor importance. It was so St. Paul spoke concerning his meeting with our risen Lord. To us it is interesting to trace certain human features in that conversion, which has so greatly helped to fashion history. He carried influences from Judaism with him, some of which reached below

the realm of his own consciousness: he had studied the Scriptures of the Old Testament: he must have been impressed by the bearing of those disciples whom he persecuted, and particularly by the martyrdom of St. Stephen. All these things, no doubt, were factors in the great change. But not of these did he make mention when he wrote of his conversion. "It pleased God to reveal His Son in me." "I was before a blasphemer and a persecutor, howbeit I obtained mercy." "And, last of all, he was seen of me also as of one born out of due time." He uses in the last passage so strong a phrase to denote the violence and the unexpectedness of his great change that our Revisers have not dared to give its literal meaning. He had been met by Christ. That was sufficient. He was content with the Great Cause and little concerned about the method.

When we study the experiences of those who have known this change of heart, the same point becomes luminous. In different ways they went out to experiment with life, travelling along the road of unbelief, lingering in forbidden fields, breaking down barriers erected by the wisdom of the generations, "lovers of pleasure more than

lovers of God," and then—something happened which each can only explain by saying, "God met me, and brought me back." The first of "the post-conversion characteristics," said Professor James," is the sense of a higher control and a corresponding assurance of peace." We are not allowed to escape, though we may imagine that restraint has been flung from our hearts for ever. At times men have thought that they were running away from God, when actually, they were rushing straight into His open arms.

A POET'S STUDY IN CONVERSION

JOHN MASEFIELD's widely read poem: "The Everlasting Mercy," is a poet's study in the "Fact of Conversion." He presents the problem to us in the history of Saul Kane, a village wastrel, a drunkard, poacher, prize-fighter, and libertine. An eminent psychologist has divided souls into two classes, "the souls that are tough, and the souls that are tender." All students of life would place Saul Kane among the tough souls and give him a distinguished position in that category. He was a hopeless member of

the community to which he was a perpetual scandal—an outrage, and a blot, upon the good name of his town. What can be done with such a man? Is there any remedy which civilisation possesses for such a social malady? The answer of Masefield is, that there is power in the grace of God to change that life in a moment of wonder. This, I take it, is the supreme message of the poem.

John Masefield had lived with men, and knew them as no man could, who had always dwelt among the fancies and myths, the forms and colours, which so naturally sway the heart of a poet. At fourteen, he was indentured to a captain in the mercantile marine, and there he saw human nature unadorned; sometimes too great to need adornment, sometimes reaching down to unutterable depths of shame and bondage. This makes the more valuable the clear testimony of his confidence, that the soul of man may escape from the uttermost dungeon of captivity, into the glad freedom and light of the love of God.

There is a flower in the Tropics, which is long concealed within a coarse thick covering so hard and unattractive, that no one, untaught, could

imagine the loveliness within. As the sun woos the hidden flower, life stirs within the thick encasement which threatens now to become its tomb, and, at last, gathering strength, bursts open the walls, sometimes with a report which may be heard yards away. Most flowers turn quietly to the sun, and are lured by its beams into beauty. Happy are those lives which, like the flowers, open to God without any conscious effort or striving. John Masefield, however, pictures the light falling upon something tough and unyielding. At the inmost centre the soul abides, but: "wall upon wall the gross flesh hems it in." The light shines upon the soul of Saul Kane, and the walls are shattered for the imprisoned glory to appear. We see him unregenerate, his life a wild blasphemy; when, suddenly, a word of God enters the madness and the shame, and, in one amazing flash, he is changed. The man stands in the light—a new-born soul—rejoicing in the Everlasting Mercy.

The faith which the poet expresses must be the unquestioned faith of the Church of Christ. To falter or hesitate here is to imperil the very nerve of her mission in the world. There is no

hopeless or irrecoverable human life, desperate though its condition may appear. The deepest, truest thing about the worst man is, that he has been made in the image of God, and that, though it may be scarred and defaced, the Divine impression can never be destroyed. In his lowest degradation, he is different from the brute to whose level he seems to descend. His life there is an unnatural life. His supreme kinships are elsewhere. The conversion of such a man is actually a return to himself. It is not an emergence into an existence with which he had nothing in common before. Then, in the true sense of the word, does he become human.

"Take all in a word, the truth in God's breast
Lies trace for trace upon ours impressed;
Though He is so bright, and we so dim,
We are made in His image to witness Him."

It is this which makes our human life so full of hope when, to a superficial glance, it appears most hopeless. Jesus looked for virtues in most unlikely places and was not disappointed. He expected to find generosity in Zacchaeus, purity in Mary of Magdala, and firmness in the vacillating Simon.

Every man has in him the making of many characters. He is a composite of various forces: his soul is a realm in which many factions strive for mastery. Into such a divided kingdom there comes the Divine Helper, able and willing to give supremacy to a man's depressed but better nature. He encourages the good within our hearts; voices the prayer which elevates and purifies; and leads the warring elements to a supreme loyalty to Jesus as Lord.

WAITING FOR THE DAWN

THE CONVERSION of Saul Kane began when he was in the ring, about to commence a prize-fight with a fellow poacher, surrounded by:—

> *"The five and forty human faces*
> *Inflamed by drink and going to races."*

From the outset he has had a feeling of remorse, because, as he said to himself: "I'm fighting to defend a lie." Again and again the impulse came to him to step forward and confess to his opponent that he was in the wrong, but he puts the thought away lest the spectators should deem him a coward

and some lose their stakes. After the fight, in which Kane was successful, he and his associates resort to the village inn, where the night was spent in bestial drinking and revelry. And there, while his companions lie about him in drunken stupor, we have the first indication that the mind of Saul Kane is being moved upon by the Divine soul-winner.

"I opened window wide and leaned
Out of that pigstye of the fiend,
And felt a cool wind go like grace
About the sleeping market-place.
The clock struck three, and sweetly, slowly,
The bells chimed Holy, Holy, Holy;
And in a second's pause there fell
The cold note of the chapel bell.
And then a cock crew, flapping wings,
And summat made me think of things."

He thought of the men and women throughout the years who had heard the striking of the clocks, the chiming of those bells:—

"I wish I knew if they'd a got
A kind of summat we've a not,
If them as built the church so fair
Were half the chaps folks say they were."

But whatever they were, they have gone; and, with this pensive mood upon him, Saul Kane wonders on:

"I wondered, then, why life should be
And what would be the end of me
When youth and health and strength were gone
And cold old age came creeping on."

It was all a mad, disgusting game in which he was inextricably mixed up, but there is no hope of change or escape now:—

"For parson chaps are mad supposin'
A chap can change the road he's chosen."

And at that hopelessness the devil's voice came counselling suicide.

Obviously something strange has been occurring within this wild soul. He has gone as far as he is able to go, and has been met by One who will not let him rest. Looking at this man leaning out of the window, one is reminded of the psalmist's words: "My soul doth wait for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning; I say more than they that watch for the morning." There is no gleam of light in the sky yet, and he

does not know why he waits; but his spirit is longing unutterably for the coming of One Who is very near, and Whose voice will soon command "the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" to shine upon this watcher of the night.

This scene comes to us charged with universal meaning. Men look for God who would themselves deny the fact, and concerning whom such might be our last thought. Very true are those familiar words:

> *"Far and wide though all unknowing*
> *Pants for Thee each mortal breast."*

The garden in March gives no evidence of its awakening, but tremendous things are happening beneath the surface in bulb and root and seed. Godlessness is not the deepest thing in any soul. The roots of our being stretch themselves out after the Infinite.

No human eye saw what was taking place in the soul of Tolstoy on the eve of his conversion. He was brilliant; he had wealth; he had wife and children whom he loved and who loved him; he was respected by his contemporaries. His seemed

a most enviable lot, while, actually, he was of all men most miserable. There was in his mind an endless debate whether he should put an end to this wretched existence: "I felt like one lost in a wood, who, horrified at having lost his way, rushes about wishing to find the road, yet knowing that each step he takes confuses him more and more, and still cannot help rushing about." Then in the mercy of God, through the experience of the peasants about his home, he found peace through faith. He did not seem a likely candidate for conversion, but actually he was watching and waiting for the light.

We are safe in assuming something within the mind to which only religion can make an appeal. Some critics have contended that the discourse at the well could not have been spoken to a Samaritan woman, so lofty and so spiritual is its message. But the Speaker knew what was in the human mind, and never failed to assume the longing heart. Many believed in Him because of His belief in them.

"There is joy, in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that *changes his mind,*" said our Lord. May we not apply those great

words to this watcher looking out into the night, listening wistfully to the bells chiming, "Holy, Holy, Holy"? Those celestial spectators do not wait for the work to be completed, for the prodigal to be restored to his abandoned heritage: they begin their glad songs when his thoughts turn to the home life: they rejoice when the mind is changed, when it quivers with the desire for something different. Flowers there are that open in the dark; and men sit up to see the change. So do these God-filled minds perceive movings of the spirit, in the dark, where we have no vision. In this watcher for the morning they have fresh evidence that the Spirit continues to strive and to prevail with men.

THE BREAK OF DAY

IN THE recoil from the man he had been, Saul Kane acts like one beside himself, rushing out into the dark:—

> *"As mad as twenty blooded colts;*
> *And out into the street I pass,*
> *As mad as two-year-olds at grass."*

He raves aloud of hell and destruction, and turns the quiet English country town into a pandemonium. We have seen a colt, with the strong hand of the rider upon it for the first time, kicking and plunging until it owns its master. Strong hands are now upon this wild, turbulent spirit, and we wait with confidence through all the passion of a last revolt, for the great surrender.

The change came before the day was over.

There are many roads by which one may enter our city—roads which converge from every point of the compass. The city of Mansoul also has many open ways, all of which are known to its rightful owner, and some to no other. Almost any experience may be to Him a means of access. Some hearts have been stormed by a sudden sorrow, others by a flood of joy. Sometimes a casual word, or even a look, such as that which broke the heart of Peter, has been sufficient for God to enter and take possession.

When John Masefield was twenty-two years of age, he took up very casually one of Chaucer's poems, and it, he declares, became "the poem of my conversion, leading me into a new glad world of thought, in fellowship with Shakespeare,

Milton, Shelley, and Keats." The greater passing, also—of the human soul into fellowship with God—is accomplished at times by the least happenings. "Just when we're safest" something awakens us, and we leap into the arms of God in grateful surrender. The fact of course is, that there has been much preparation out of sight before the final cause occurs. The vessel is ready to be launched, and now but little power is needed to move it forward into freedom upon the great waters.

It was a word spoken by a woman, in the public house where Saul Kane was drinking, which the Holy Ghost used to lead this man to affirm, "Jesus is Lord."

"There used to be a custom then,
Miss Bourne, the Friend, went round at ten
To all the pubs in all the place,
To bring the drunkards' souls to grace;
Some sulked, of course, and some were stirred,
But none give her a dirty word."

That night, maddened with the agony of his divided soul, and inflamed by drink, Saul Kane insulted her as none had done before:—

"She up to me with black eyes wide,
She looked as though her spirit cried;
She took my tumbler from the bar
Beside where all the matches are,
And poured it out upon the floor dust,
Among the fag-ends, spit and sawdust.
'Saul Kane,' she said, 'when next you drink
Do me the gentleness to think
That every drop of drink accursed
Makes Christ within you die of thirst,
That every dirty word you say
Is one more flint upon his way.
Another thorn about His head,
Another mock by where He tread,
Another nail, another cross,
All that you are is that Christ's loss.'"

There and then the bolted door broke in, and Christ entered to give this man a new birth. "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness did shine into this heart to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

"It seems then," writes Professor J. Arthur Thompson, "if we are reading the story of Evolution aright, that a genius may be born like Minerva from the brain of Jove. There is,

brusquely, a new pattern, something quite original. It used to be a dogma, '*Natura non facit saltus*' (Nature makes no leaps) but evidences of '*Natura saltatrix*' (Nature is continually leaping) are rapidly accumulating. They spoke of life creeping slowly upwards, but the Proteus leaps as well as creeps." (The Wonder of Life, p. 584.) It is interesting to find such an illustration of swift emergence and development written from the standpoint of evolution. Nature has taken such enormous leaps that we cannot trace her steps. Who can bridge the gulf which was crossed, for example, in passing from matter to life? And she still leaps. Before our astonished eyes the dragon fly emerges, in a moment, into something quite original and daring, soaring into the light and glory of a new world.

Such glorious leaps into a new spiritual world also have taken place throughout the centuries. In one splendid experience, Saul of Tarsus became Paul, the apostle. "I opened the book and read in silence the chapter on which my eyes first fell. I cared to read no further, nor was there need of it, since at once, with the ending of the sentence, the light of security was passed

into my heart and all the gloom of hesitation fled away." Thus runs the familiar passage in Augustin's Confessions. "I was," declared Lacordaire, "unbelieving in the evening, on the morrow a Christian, certain with an invincible certainity."

These shattering changes do not break any laws: they have their sufficient cause. We look at the tap room of a public house, and see Saul Kane confronted by "The Friend," and we ask "How can these things be?" But there is a wind blowing; a wind entering the heart emptied now of pride and self-sufficiency; a wind rushing in to fill the vacant place; the searching, cleansing, healing breath of God. "So is every one that is born of the Spirit." The critic who speaks of this sudden conversion as a contradiction—has forgotten God.

THE TRANSFIGURED WORLD

"IF ANY man be in Christ he is a new creature, old things are passed away, behold all things have become new." That is another well-marked and clearly defined feature in the experience of the newly born soul. The world

has apparently undergone some objective change. When Carlyle was delivered from the "Everlasting Nay," that land of barren denial; and had entered by an experience as sudden as that which is recorded here, into the soul's "Everlasting Yea," he found nothing more amazing than this. "What is Nature? Art thou not the living garment of God? O Heaven, is it in very deed He, then, that ever speaks through thee? that lives and loves in thee, that lives and loves in me? The Universe is not dead and demoniacal, a charnel house with spectres, but god-like and my Father's."

It was a new world into which Saul Kane entered that glorious day; the tomb had become a garden, the prison a cathedral. The cup in his hand is now a sacramental chalice. All natural things become symbols of a spiritual presence. Christ is calling to him in all he sees; in bud, flower, brook, ploughman and everything.

"O Christ who holds the open gate,
O Christ who drives the furrow straight,
O Christ the plough, O Christ, the laughter
Of holy white birds flying after."

We have made too little, not too much, of the Real Presence of our blessed Lord in the Sacrament. When He took bread and wine and blessed them, He was pointing us forward to the time when all things should become sacramental. We are intended to hold communion with Him in all things, and to find coming to meet us, through all the luminous transparencies of our world, "a Presence that disturbs us with the joy of elevated thoughts." If we begin by finding Him in one place, we may end by finding Him in every place.

WHILE IT IS DAY

THERE IS one important factor in Conversion which John Masefield has noted and which has been frequently overlooked. The splendid vision of spiritual realities which came to Saul Kane led him to take up some useful work in the world. The celestial glory is to be embodied in the calling of a ploughman. He had not attempted to deny Mrs. Jaggard's summing up of his past life:

"Who never worked, not he, nor earned,
Nor will do till the seas are burned,
Who never did since he was whole
A hand's turn for a human soul."

All that, he knows, must come to an end. Idleness is not merely a crime; it is a sin. He sees, in the early morning, amid all his sacramental ecstasy, "Old Callow," the ploughman, "at the task of God"; and he resolves to make that his calling. There is a kind of ordination in it as there should be in every man's labour.

"I kneeled there in the muddy fallow,
I knew that Christ was there with Callow,
That Christ was standing there with me,
That Christ had taught me what to be,
That I should plough, and as I ploughed
My Saviour Christ would sing aloud,
And as I drove the clods apart
Christ would be ploughing in my heart
Through rest—harrow and bitter roots,
Through all my bad life's rotten fruits."

That is one of the deep, essential laws of Christian experience which we need to recover in our day. Its supreme sanction is to be found in the fact that our Lord Himself worked for

so many years as a carpenter. We must proclaim the dignity of labour as an integral part of Christian discipleship. Conversion should make a man useful to the community. We may even speak of its economic value without lowering the character of its high discourse. The acknowledgment of God in Christ solves one of the most difficult problems of our time by bringing dignity into every service rendered to the community. There will be nothing sordid or mean in work done in communion with Him. The plough becomes as sacred as the table of our Lord if we find the Real Presence there. Conversion is the liberation of the Eternal Spirit, through our human life, into all the duties and relationships of the daily round and common task.

THE DIVINE PLOUGHMAN

THERE IS, declared the poet in conclusion, One who waits upon every soul, being patient over it until He sees the harvest home.

"And in men's hearts in many lands
A spiritual ploughman stands
Forever waiting, waiting now,
The heart's 'Put in, man, zook the plough.'"

His ministry is wider than all the creeds; more catholic than all the churches. Before the human worker appears on the scene, He has been ploughing and sowing the seed. The desire which trembles in the breast for something better than we have been or known, is, "Christ in us" not the fulfilment, but "the hope of glory." And He Who created the hope will bring it to maturity. Travellers tell us of hillsides now clothed with vegetation which once were lurid with volcanic fires, of luxuriant flowers blooming in districts once barren and desolate. So does the Husbandman work in character. "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice even with joy and singing . . . they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God." It is His glory and no other for which the poet cries:—

"O lovely lily clean,
O lily springing green
O lily bursting white
Dear lily of delight,
Spring in my heart agen
That I may flower to men."